CHRISTVS CONSOLATOR

WORDS FOR HEARTS IN TROUBLE

By
H.C.G.MOULE, D.D.
Bishop of Durham

S.P.C.K.: NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, LONDON.

Bc

BV 4905 .M68 1916
Moule, H. C. G. (Handley Carr Glyn), 1841-1920.
Christus consolator : words for hearts in trouble

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Not without hope we suffer and we mourn
Les croix sont les marteaux pour forger la couronne

EIGHTEENTH THOUSAND

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE:
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, LONDON, W.C.
1916

4905
.M68
1916

First Edition, June, 1915.
Second Edition, August, 1915.
Third Edition, October, 1915.
Fourth Edition, January, 1916.

*** The writer is indebted to the kindness of correspondents for the correction of two quotations (pages 73, 96). In one case hearsay, in the other memory, had been at fault.

Note

THIS book is intended principally to remind those whose hearts the European War has stricken of the hope and comfort which lie ready for their wounds in our Lord Jesus Christ. I shall be glad indeed if anything in my pages may bring help to other sorrowing souls; for grief and death do not suspend their normal visitation among us, the infliction of the sore pains and losses of common life, because of their tremendous activities to-day on the field of battle, in the war-hospital, and on the deep. But I have written with these latter troubles more directly in view. With reverential sympathy I lay my little book at the feet of those who see their dear ones smitten and maimed, or who, with wet or with tearless eyes, lament their death, in this awful struggle not of nations only but of right with wrong, of light with darkness, of

causes dear to the God of truth and peace with the energies, I cannot doubt it any longer, of dark powers of the Unseen, working through misguided man. I dare to hope that some, if only some, of the reflections here set out may tend to lift such suffering spirits to the region where comfort, and the calm of hope, and a victory in Christ over all embitterment and rebellion, will fill and bless them, beginning already to transfigure sorrow into living peace. If it is so at all, to our heavenly Master all the thanks be wholly given.

I add only that in the third and fourth chapters I am indebted for some important suggestions to a small book, as able and suggestive as it is finely modest, 'God and the World' (S.P.C.K.), by the Rev. A. W. Robinson, D.D.

HANDLEY DUNELM.

AUCKLAND CASTLE:
June, 1915.

I take the opportunity of a second impression to say that, since this book first appeared, I have been called (July 14th) very suddenly to surrender to her Lord's keeping above the dear Wife whose sympathy, counsels and prayers lay behind every page which follows. Let me humbly affirm that in my own great grief Christ is the Consoler in deepest reality.

H. D.

July, 1915.

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He spread it before me, and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

EZEKIEL

The Sorrows

The air is full of farewells to the dying,
And mournings for the dead;
The heart of Rachel, for her children crying,
Will not be comforted.

LONGFELLOW

I

The Sorrows

WE are living through a time of sorrows untold, a valley of the shadow of death. The World-War is shaking every nation. It is costing an agony of stress and of loss to the peoples actually engaged. Such is the universal upheaval, so are old landmarks altered, that the time before the war, though not a twelvemonth away from us as yet, looks like another era, remote and different. 'Behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens' above Europe and the world.

Yet there are uncounted hearts for which this immense public tribulation, although indeed they feel its shock and alarm, is less oppressively sad by far than their own personal sorrows. They cannot help it, and their Maker does not ask them to help it. They love their country, and they pray for it, and sometimes they tremble for it. But what presses on them most intensely and continuously, and with the heaviest pain, is

the thought of the vanished hand and the beloved voice that is still. They feel as if they were buried already in the graves, very likely the unknown graves, of their dearest. And if that utmost grief is spared them, they are thinking day and night of the 'missing' ones, of whom no tidings come. Or they are tormented with the unbearable recollection of precious lives doomed to the slow misery of the prisoners' camp, and there too often exposed (if sober witness is to be believed) to privations, to indignities, the imagination of which is as a nightmare upon the loving soul. Or they have seen the brave and buoyant son or brother —sent out with all the hopes and prayers of loving pride—sent back maimed for life, or blind beyond hope of sight.

The bereaved, the stricken, the unspeakably disappointed—they know the dreadful difference between to-day and that dear yesterday when all in life seemed to stand erect and flourishing for their beloved ones and for them. Life now is like one of the wrecked dwellings of the battle-country. It is a shattered and blackened home, struck to death by this dire war. Who shall sum the aggregate of such sorrows? Who shall rightly weigh

even one unit of anguish that helps to build up the mass ?

It is for hearts thus stricken that I venture to write this little book. And I begin by trying to place before my own heart, in some sort of reality, their bowed and broken multitudes. In the great griefs of life, if one would have the least hope of consoling, one must, however feebly, understand. If one would help at all, one must, in some little measure, share.

I had thought at first of giving in detail a few samples of sorrows of the war known to me personally. I had put down descriptions of three bereavements, each of them being the hero-death of the loved and loving son of one or another old Cambridge friend of mine ; young lives, all of splendid promise, cut down like the flower of grass. I had it in mind to tell of the anguish of suspense felt at this moment by a widowed mother over her gallant son, last seen alive defending a trench against hopeless odds, and of whom no word has been heard since. I was going with a great effort to tell the whole story of a baby's ruthless murder before the eyes of the mother, who was struggling to get the little one home after

the declaration of war. That mother is in a private asylum now; her desolate husband, if he still lives, is at the front.

But I do not pursue that plan. I feel sadly sure that, whatever incidents of woe I might produce from my own knowledge, direct or nearly direct, there would be some reader who would say (at least over all but that last incident) that what I had related looked only gray beside the inky shadow of his or her own desolation. After all, the obituaries in the morning paper are as appealing as anything which I could tell about the bereaved. With a monotony unspeakably moving, they recite the deaths of this and that good soldier; 'only son,' 'only child,' 'dear eldest son,' 'dear youngest son,' 'dearly loved husband.' And what a multitude which none can number these records represent! In one despatch we were briefly told how six days' tremendous combat had cost two thousand deaths to our Expeditionary Force. And every one of those lives 'belonged to somebody.' The world is altered from morning into midnight for untold hearts by that one great killing.

ek. ii. 'There was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.' So we

read of the mysterious scroll spread out before Ezekiel's eyes. For us, any number of the daily newspaper may well be described in the same terms, as we try to realize what is meant by the columns of 'casualties'—that ineffectual word, almost cynically inadequate.

So I will not try to elaborate a picture of my own, marshalling in detail a procession of griefs. If I find the readers whom I presume to seek, personal sufferers and sorrowers in this dark time, that is indeed unnecessary.

I just place before myself the vast phenomenon of a host of bitter personal losses and distresses coming all together. At this moment I do not suggest one detail of consoling thought. I shall do what I can in that way later. But for the present I wish, if only for my own effort's sake, to place the great shadow full in view. Let me recall deliberately for myself, if any consolation worth the naming is to be offered, the dark realities of the pangs around us, and the riddle, the mystery, of it all.

How long, LORD? Wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever? Wherefore hast Thou made all men for nought?

The Book of Psalms

The Mystery

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams ?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life.

. . . . .

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

In Memoriam

II

The Mystery

THE word ' mystery ' was the closing note of the last chapter. I wrote it there on purpose. Our chief thought had been the sheer agony which the war has inflicted upon poor human hearts. Here are these innumerable wrecks and deaths, these tremendous lists of ' casualties.' The pain of them, to those who love the sufferers, is made all the heavier, of course, by the recollection of the terrible means which, more in this conflict than ever before, have been used to maim and to destroy.

The heart trembles when our beloved fall asleep in the quiet bedroom, on the white pillow, fondly tended, cheered with text and prayer, whispering back a last word of perfect peace in the hush of listening love. Even where death is not in immediate question, we watch the physical distress of a racking malady, amidst every alleviating aid, with a mental sympathy which passes into physical pain in ourselves. But alas for those who know that

their dearest have suffered, have died, in the dreadful throng, the dreadful solitude, of the battle. And these black central shadows, as we have remembered, have the dark fringe all around them of troubles only less heavy, as beloved ones are thought of as maimed, or 'missing,' or imprisoned. How many are the wives, parents, sisters, who cannot for one waking hour get their thoughts away from the misery of it all?

But it is the mystery, rather than even the sheer misery, that I pause upon here. I must do so for myself, if I want to apply the least real consolation to these wounds. As I said before, if I would help, I must first share. And God knows that I do share, in the depth of the soul, the distressing sense of the mystery of the thing. Why is all this allowed to be? What is the matter, that this tremendous wreckage of human hearts is possible and is actually going on? Put this immense scene of pain, death, and waiting, side by side with the idea, which we try to believe to be true, of a universal order working for right and good. Put this wilderness of wrong and wretchedness beside the creed which seats almighty Love on the throne

of existence. What are we to say? Is not the mystery absolute and intolerable?

Can such things be, and can we yet believe, with the happy girl in Browning, that

> 'God's in His heaven;
> All's right with the world'?

Can we speak so, with an unshaken heart?

'*Unshaken?*' No; that cannot be. 'At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of its place.' All these wrecks and horrors, in which physical and moral dreadfulnesses go together, are just a fragment, a specimen, though a heavy and ragged one, of the whole great riddle of evil as we see it working in a world which we Christians yet say has a central and sovereign throne, on which sits neither a ruthless Despot, nor a soul-less First Cause, neither bad nor good. No, that seat is occupied, we affirm, by a Being infinitely conscious, infinitely present everywhere, living in all things while He also is sovereign over them, good beyond our highest dreams, perfectly just and perfectly kind, and whom we worship as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Job xxxvii. 1

Job iii. 6, 24 &c.

Ps. lxxiii. 4 (*Prayer Book*)

It is a very ancient trouble, this riddle of wrong and sorrow in a God-created world. This was the torment of Job's mind in that majestic Biblical poem; it made his soul even more miserable than his grievously suffering body. It was this which very nearly goaded Asaph, in the seventy-third Psalm, to renounce his faith in a good God. 'I had almost said even as they!' Almost he had lost patience. Almost he had 'reproached God.'

From many sides comes this temptation to troubled silence, to doubt, despair, denial. Now it is from 'Nature, red in tooth and claw,' from the universal war amongst animal existences, the malignant instruments with which the tiger, the cobra, and a host of other creatures, large or little, come into being. Now it is the desolating convulsions of land, sea, air,

> 'When earthquakes swallow or when tempests sweep
> Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep.'

Now, and oftener, and bringing a stronger and harsher challenge still, from further down in the darkness, it is the moral miseries of man's world. We think of the silent horrors of treachery and cruelty, in dark places of the earth,

The King's Library

uncivilized or civilized. We see in our souls, perhaps with our eyes, the helpless victims of the petty tyrant, whose lips quite possibly are specious with smooth economic maxims, and who is hard as the millstone. Then there is the world of woe created always anew, every day and night, by lust and by drink. Here and now are the evils, tempestuous, murderous, thunderous, of war and battle, with their ghastly accompaniments, as possible to-day as when Sennacherib or Attila made a campaign—the fire, the plunder, the outrages much worse than death, let loose together on poor pretty villages and on harmless lives, while from far away comes, like a long echo of the local horrors, the sound of the wailings of the distant lovers of the fallen fighting-men. Probably my reader's heart makes one note in that choir of sorrow.

We do our best, and rightly, to limit and reduce the vastness of the mystery of evil. We divide deeply between one sort of evil and another. On one side we set purely physical pain; this plainly, in countless cases, does not rise directly from moral wrong, and often it proves even necessary in the cause of mercy and righteous-

ness. We set in quite another column the fathomless evil of the will, the injustice, the falsehood, the hardness, the cruelty, the bestial violence, and at the back of it all the hideous selfishness, with which man can make man so miserable. Even within that dread class we can find, with solemn feelings, a mitigation of the mass of woe, as we see the grand results in moral good which can be struck out by the cruel blows of moral evil. We watch the meek but glorious victory of some patient sufferer, some Uncle Tom in the immortal slave-story, and the question is almost forced on us, whether such splendid goodness could come to being at all without such evil to give it call and cause.

But when in this direction, and in a hundred others, we have done our best to see the darkness less dark and less vast, do we not seem to listen again, and to hear a sigh, a groan, almost universal? We ask, is not finite existence, 'creation,' the outcome of the fiat of an ultimate Author, believed to be good? Does it not, in our creed, rest for its continuance, moment by moment, on a sovereign will, thought to be perfect and acceptable? Then how comes into being this enormous mass of trouble, not

merely in the shape of disciplinary pain, but of hideous injury and ill-will? Why this moral wrong, seething everywhere in manhood, and bursting out into all the varieties of conscious woe?

Yes, the heart is indeed shaken. Perhaps we are very near to 'saying even as they.' And part, no small part, of the answer must come for the present in that wise saying of the Rabbis of old: 'Teach thy tongue to say, *I do not know.*'

Friday asked Crusoe, in a memorable talk, 'If God much stronger, why God no kill the devil?' And Crusoe found, so he tells us, that 'though I was now an old man, yet I was but a young Doctor, and ill qualified for a solver of difficulties; and at first I could not tell what to say.'

'Teach thy tongue to say, *I do not know.*' Yet that confession, rightly made, will mean an ignorance not hopeless and sullen, but humble and reliant, at the feet of Him who knows, and whom to know is life. But we approach the fulness of that thought of peace by some further steps of recollection.

Righteous art Thou, O LORD, when I plead with Thee: yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments.

JEREMIAH

In Quest of Light

Though I speak, my grief is not asswaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased?

But now He hath made me weary: Thou hast made desolate all my company.

The Book of Job

III

In Quest of Light

(1)

'THEY feared as they entered into the cloud.' So felt the three great Apostles under the radiant canopy which spread itself over and around their transfigured Lord and them. It was natural; they were moved all through by those 'powers of the world to come,' before which the human spirit, always more in proportion to its depth and insight, stands awed. The fear found relief out of the bosom of the mystery. From the cloud came a voice, divine in origin, human in accent: 'This is my beloved Son; hear Him.'

Luke ix. 34

Heb. vi.

Dark clouds as well as bright, fogs of the abyss as well as blinding splendours of the throne, have to be entered by our hearts. We are within such shadows now, and we fear. But for us also there can come relief. Through these black folds, as through the 'uncreated light' of the Transfiguration, can come a voice, divine

and human, a voice to tell us at least this, that the cloud is not everything, that things greater than the cloud are eternally real, that light is larger than night, that God, the Father of our Lord, is transcendent over the anti-god, the Evil One.

I am about to place before my reader some thoughts in that direction, and to follow them on with others, bringing us, I hope, nearer and nearer to the central certainties of faith and hope. Perhaps even in this first study of helps in face of mystery we shall find the true light breaking in on the great shadow, and even piercing through it, enough to strengthen us to wait for the perfect day in peace, and to set ourselves, in spite of all our grief, to love and serve. I do not think we shall see the full sunshine over any mystery till the eternal day begins. The twilight will not quite pass here. But we may discern even here that the twilight is of the dawn, not the evening. We may know where the sun will come glittering up in due time. So, for what remains of our mortal work-time, we shall set our seat not in the dark corner of the chamber but at the open window, looking to the East.

So I approach some counter-thoughts to our sad contemplation, attempted in the last chapter, of the dark riddle of evil.

But first one preliminary word, to meet the heart of a very possible reader. I shall try here to treat this grave subject in the way of 'guesses at truth,' suggestions drawn rather from what may be than from certainties. And very likely I may express even these less clearly and less convincingly than another expositor might do. If my friend seems to find this chapter and the next rather perplexing than illuminating, then I beg him to consider them unread, and to forgive the writer, and to go on to the following pages. There, if anywhere in the book, I shall handle certainties and point straight to the light. The present chapters will matter less than what follows in our search for a deep and abiding 'comfort and good hope.'

And now let the reader who may care to follow me here remember that I am not writing for students and philosophers, but for hearts acquainted with grief. To them I pray God that I may bring some genuine help, even in these first guesses and suggestions, making it a little easier to let

drop that sad weight of mental bewilderment which can form so grievous an addition to the load of heart's sorrow.

What, then, is one chief mental alleviation, as it seems to me, in pondering the mystery of evil in the universe of created being?

Let us first think, very simply, of some chief evidences for the *good origin* of the world. The Greeks called the universe the *cosmos*, that is, the *order*. The word expressed the deep impression left on man by the visible course of 'Nature,' the march of sun and stars, the round of seasons, the steady sequence of the same effects on the same conditions, and again the infinite delicacy of even the smallest things in Nature (so wonderfully opened up in modern times by the microscope), and, generally, the tendency of natural growths, as trees and plants, towards beauty not deformity. It expressed the fact, which our latest knowledge always makes surer, that 'creation' does not run wild, without limits and a plan. It is not a *chaos*, 'without form and void'; it is a *cosmos*, an order, all through its heights and depths. And it suggests, on the whole, that good rather than evil lies at the root, at the

fountain. Things are evidently, to a vast degree, adjusted aright to one another, not arranged to spoil one another. As I said just above, there is a tendency to beauty in them as a whole, and that is good, not evil. An ancient observer of Christian life, one Aristides, writing about the year 130, speaks of the noble and admirable lives of the disciples of the Lord, as he watched them. And he says that their purity and kindness seems to result in their experiencing a wonderful delight in Nature; 'thus there flows out to them,' he says, 'the beauty that is in the world.' Such 'beauty' he assumes there is, inherent in the world, a glorious characteristic of the *cosmos*, and such as to be responsive to the moral beauty of a good soul. Was he not right? Is not such 'optimism' true to our deepest insight? Alike the starry march of the silent skies and the tender grace of the flower in the hedgerow suggest not only order but a beautiful and liberal kindness lying hid behind it.

And then, what of the observer, Man, and what of that *cosmos* which exists in his own being? Is there no 'optimistic' witness present here when we think of certain facts within ourselves? Is it nothing

that we find within us faculties perfectly adjusted for use and life in this world around us, a favourable order here also? Then, deep within all our powers, lies the deepest and greatest thing of all, conscience, moral instinct and insight. That mysterious presence is such that we cannot for a moment, if we are in health of mind and heart, praise what it condemns and feel blame and shame for what it praises. Is not this an 'optimistic' witness, a signal that our source of being is good, not evil, righteous, not wicked? For it is unnatural to think that our soul, conscious, active, capable of unselfish love, has flowed uphill from a cause morally below it. It joins with the wonderful order of Nature, and says, in a noble harmony of testimony, that outward beauty, endless delicate correspondence, and also will, love, sense of right, all lift their hands and point towards an Origin which is at least all we can mean by personal and good. They join to declare the fact and the glory of God.

Then comes in Revelation. It takes all these hints and leadings, and transfigures them into life indeed. Revelation comes to us—I will not say in Christianity, but in Christ, who is Christianity in person. And

He says, with the accent of infinite certainty, that God is all-holy, and all-kind.

So I have tried to outline the 'optimistic' aspect of being. But now, and perhaps with all the heavier sense of pain, we face the dreadful anomaly, the discord, the contradiction, of the evil that is in this world, the cruelty found amidst the kindness, the deformity breaking in upon the beauty. Think of the terrors of Nature, the convulsive forces of the earthquake or the cyclone. Ponder the ravages of disease; 'dire is the tossing, deep the groans.' The cruel animal lurks amidst the glorious forest of the tropics. And not only in the war-stricken countryside or in the camps of savages, but in rustic cottages and elegant mansions, is to be found the treacherous, tyrannic, lustful, pitiless man.

Alas for the mystery, which is so terribly a fact. Why is it all, and whence does it all come? We are right, as we saw before, to make all possible reductions of the dark fact. Great students of Nature remind us, for example, that the sufferings of animals, real as no doubt they are, are not like those of men, with man's developed consciousness. In many forms of life, insects and fishes, for instance, they are probably

very slight, and even the highest animals cannot be believed to feel quite as we do. The same is true, in measure, of the lowest types of mankind. And, to look quite another way, we are surely all aware of a merciful 'law' by which we remember past pleasure more vividly than past pain. But when we have said all we can, is it not a tremendous fact on the wrong side, a 'pessimistic' fact, this presence of disaster and disorder, of pangs and of fears, this *chaos* in the *cosmos*?

Yes, it is even so. I need not retrace old ground about it, and write our second chapter over again. Rather my purpose now is to suggest some thoughts about it which may help to bring back the 'optimism' of patience, faith, and hope.

In Quest of Light

THE ENEMY

Sole Positive of night!
Antipathist of light!
Fate's only essence! primal scorpion rod—
The one permitted opposite of God.
Condensed blackness and abysmal storm
Compacted to one sceptre
Arm the grasp enorm;
The Intercepter,
The substance that still casts the shadow, death.

S. T. Coleridge

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

St. Paul

IV

In Quest of Light

(II)

'AN enemy hath done this.' So the master of the field, in our Lord's parable, said to his servants, his people from the farm, when they came to tell him with troubled looks that the well-sown wheat-field proved to be dotted all over with tares. He was a good master, and a good agriculturist, and he had sowed exclusively good seed. But he had an enemy, and the enemy had stolen out in the night, and sowed bad seed in the furrows meant only for the good. Matt. xiii. 28

The parable may help us to see light not only in those problems of sin and salvation which were its first concern. It may give us one clue at least amidst the problems of world-evil, of the *chaos* in the *cosmos*.

The Holy Scriptures open with a majestic vision of creation. God plans an abode for His dear creature, Man, made in the Maker's likeness. One wonderful 'day' after another rolls out of darkness and into it again. And behold Gen. i.

a *cosmos* of light, and order, and vastly varied life—and then at last man, made to be the happy friend of God. And all, from God's view-point, for each thing's purpose and end, is good.

Gen. iii. But what does the strange, deep narrative, picturing mighty realities like an Egyptian hieroglyphic inscription, go on forthwith to tell us? We see the *cosmos* invaded by a power which brings in *chaos*. An 'enemy' appears, and approaches man, and man's world. A will is at work, hostile to God—a subtle and deadly conscious influence, a being (not a thing, but a person) who hates God, and speaks lies about Him to man, and draws man into that dreadful discord with God which we call sin. Then mischief is seen in Nature too, for Nature is in deep connexion with man. The ground is 'cursed.' The world-order is disturbed. We turn a page or two, and we find Nature turning in ruin upon man, whelming him in the flood.

Thus man himself, and man's world, are shewn to us as hurt and altered, stricken with disease and disaster, which were no more part of the Maker's plan than fever or cancer is part of the plan of the

body. In a noble little poem, 'At a solemn Musick,' Milton speaks in his own lofty way of this, using the musical imagery which he loved :

> 'Disproportion'd sin
> Jarr'd against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
> Broke the fair music which all creatures made
> To their great Lord, whose love their motion sway'd
> In perfect diapason, while they stood
> In first obedience and their state of good.'

I have called this story of the Fall, in Genesis, a sort of hieroglyphic. Hieroglyphics set forth records, just as histories printed in alphabetical writing do. But hieroglyphics are not letters but pictures ; and as such they seem to me to illustrate those first grand and profound pages of the Bible. There the foundation facts of man and the world are given to us under images and mysteries, in a manner different from common narrative, while true to the facts of God's ways with creation and with man. Do they not give us an illuminating suggestion here ? Do they not make it easier to think that, whatever there is of real evil in Nature, real disorder and disaster, real cruelty and 'dreadfulness,' it is not part of the Master's plan at all ? 'An enemy hath done this.' Yes, we are led up to

the thought that a dread personal Power has been about 'in the night,' the lord of the darkness, and has *tampered with* the world. It is not too much to believe that he has been permitted to misguide, with subtle skill and power, the course and evolution of things. He has turned, for example, the innocent energies of animal life into strife and struggle growing into ferocity. He has somehow got leave to wield the motions of air, earth, and seas, so as to compass his evil purposes, as when he let loose the whirlwind upon the family of Job, and when he worked the Galilean waters into fury to overwhelm, if it might be, the sleeping Christ. He crept into the course and development of humanity, and, in the earliest dawn of human things, perverted instincts of desire, innocent in themselves, into that self-will of the moral being which sets the being in antagonism to God.

Are we prepared to say, as the Sadducees said so long ago, that 'there is neither angel nor spirit'? That denial is as arbitrary, as unscientific, now as it was then—unless we moderns have acquired a knowledge of the unseen world which is practically omniscient. Less and less, in

our day, do the wisest minds allow themselves in such sweeping denials. More and more they realize the vastness of what we do not know, and are humble about it. Now and then I am struck by words which own the probability of the very mystery I am speaking of, words from quarters far removed from 'obsolete superstitions.' Only lately I came upon the utterance of a thinker, altogether modern, forced from him by the facts of this world-war. He confesses himself convinced that its horrors, its deliberate and calculated savagery, can only be explained by the action of a mighty personal power of evil behind the scenes of the visible.

If we take Holy Scripture in any real sense as an authoritative guide to our thinking, can we hesitate over our answer to the question: Is a personal Adversary of God and of good thinkable? Not less but more, as the Book leads us out of the dawn of Revelation to its sunrise and its noon, that shadow falls across the scene. Beyond all question the Evil One was a tremendous reality to the Holy One Himself, and to the teachers whom He trained and inspired. Not *it* but *he* assailed Him with all subtlety of allurement in the

uke iv. desert, tempting Him through good to evil, and incidentally, but seriously, claiming a vast and mysterious permitted power over att. xvi. human history. Not *it* but *he* spoke to the 2, 23 Christ a deadly suggestion through the lips of Peter. Not *it* but *he* was permitted uke xii. 3, 31 to put the Apostles to fiery tests, to possess one of them fully and finally, and to drag another into the great denial.

It is easy to spend badinage and jests upon this dark Form. Is it not worth the while to say that, supposing him to exist, it would inevitably be a part of his strategy to suggest to man that the thought is absurd, that he is not ?

Why, in a book which is written to console, do I speak of this saddest of all sad mysteries? Not with the vain hope of explaining the unexplainable. Not as if I could answer Friday's question to Crusoe. Not as if the bad thought or act, the horrible disaster, the world-ruining war, were made *in themselves* less evil because an invisible Enemy, an Evil One, is in the question. Not so. But then it is something to recognize at least this, that the crop of tares, the real harvest of wrong and misery, is not the unkind or careless sowing of the Master, but is done by an

Enemy. It sets the dread facts in another perspective. It lets us, in a sense, see light beyond them. It releases us from the agonizing question whether the immediate will of the true God is behind the shriek of the cyclone, the rage of the tiger, the stab of the assassin, the lust of the human fiend, the boundless desolation of a modern war. It is a less intolerable thing by far to think that the Enemy of the eternal Goodness has done it.

Then further the mind is relieved by this thought so far as it helps us to see that this awful interference of an evil personality in the Unseen resembles in kind, however incalculably greater it is in degree, evil facts with which we are all acquainted, and which we do not allow to destroy our faith. We read in history, we observe perhaps in our own experience, the dark phenomenon of a bad man permitted to disturb, to destroy, the peace and good of a family, of a nation, of a continent. He may be a mad Caligula, a soul-less Nero, a savage Timour, or he may be the 'petty tyrant' who breaks his wife's heart and turns his home into a hell. He is a mystery; every day he is

permitted to have his way he is a mystery. 'Why God no' stop him? We cannot tell. But every voice of reason as well as of faith tells us that over such mysteries of evil reigns and rules the infinite Mystery of good—silent, patient because eternal, waiting the time for retribution and restoration. So with the vaster fact, the cosmic evil, material and moral. It is permitted. It has not overcome the good, it has not dethroned God. He who sits on the throne is not defeated because, for a while, He permits it, seeing all things. 'For a season, if need be,' the *cosmos* suffers, 'groaning and travailing in pain.' But it is under the unsleeping eyes and the unfaltering hands of the All-Holy One, who is also, as such, for ever and of necessity, the Almighty. It is for a time. It is for a purpose, inscrutable but good. That purpose, 'the end of the Lord,' will be disclosed above. It will be seen at length, by all conscious beings in all worlds, how eternal Goodness could overrule its dark Adversary.

m. viii.

mes
11

Let our thought, as well as our heart, abide in peace within 'the shadow of the Almighty.' Be patient; He will 'subdue all things unto Himself.' Even of the

. xci.

Enemy who sows the tares the poet truly says :

> 'Tis Lucifer, the son of mystery ;
> And, since God suffers him to be,
> He also is God's minister,
> And labours for some good
> By us not understood.'

'God suffers him to be.' Our ultimate resort is sheer personal reliance on the Highest. The infinite Commander, the *Kriegherr*, the Lord of the spiritual War —in Him lies our final and immeasurable rest and hope. The campaign we do not understand. But we know HIM.

Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

Light is sown for the righteous.

The Book of Psalms

'Lift up your Hearts'

He pleased God, and was beloved of Him, so that he was translated.

He, being made perfect in a short time, fulfilled a long time.

Wisdom of Solomon

They are not lost whom we love in Him whom we cannot lose.

St. Augustine

V

'Lift up your Hearts'

HAVE I met at all the questionings of the reader's heart? Happy am I if it is so. What has been said is only what has brought to myself a genuine help towards patience and hope. For me, it has tended to place the mystery of darkness in a perspective, in a proportion, which lets us see beyond it and around it. The cloud is vast, but it is not the sky. The sky is larger, infinitely, than the cloud. The enemy is strong and subtle. But the Master of the field is almighty, eternal, and entirely good. He supremely dominates the position. Only, He reserves to Himself the ways and methods, and also the times and seasons, which He 'hath put in His own power.' Acts i. 7

One gain which we win by our thoughts on the sowing of the tares is that we can look up with all the more freedom and certainty in an appeal to the eternal Goodness against the chaos wrought by the Evil One. We can pray with a new insight and conviction not only for the

victory of man over man in the cause of right, but for God's own victory over the devil and all his works. Such prayer brings at once a solace and a strength. And then again, by lifting our minds beyond the evil of evil men to the dark power behind them, it helps us to think of the human wrong-doer, not with less shame and shock about the wrong, but with less temptation to hatred and revenge. For
s. xcvii. we thus pass behind all other 'clouds and darkness' to the great central evil, and that evil we carry to the Throne with an appeal strong and stern enough, but calmed by the dread solemnity of the matter. We call humbly but aloud upon the King Eternal to deal victoriously with His awful Adversary, till He says to him, in the thunder-
s. ix. 6 voice which all the worlds shall hear, 'O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end.'

But let us pass on. We have looked at what I may boldly call treasures of the darkness, reasons for re-assurance drawn from the world's deepest evil. Soon I shall ask my reader to go with me to the treasury of light itself, and to take and handle some of the precious things, some gems out of the 'unsearchable riches,' which lie hid

in CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR, the living and perfect Consoler. But on the way thither let us pause a little over some thoughts which may quiet the spirit yet further in its hour of grief, and prepare it better for a direct and deliberate meditation upon Him. Let me talk a little with my mourning friend over some *noble sides* of his, or of her, grief—on our way, as it were, to the central sanctuary of peace.

i. First then I make mention of the solace which lies in the great, the heroic, aspects of your trouble. I read recently, within the same quarter of an hour, two letters. Each dealt with a very real sorrow. In the one, a mother wrote about the death of her great-hearted son, slain in action, leading on the men who rejoiced to follow him. The very page seemed shadowed by the immense loss. The photograph, printed on the memorial card, shewed all the blended strength and sweetness of the perfectly true man; and now—the man was dead and buried. But the letter was not all shadow. It was even more conspicuously bright, bright with a conquering exultation over the splendid victory which that young Christian patriot's fall had been. No Spartan mother ever was more

proud of her son borne home upon his shield. Only, this mother was better than Spartan ; she saw it all in the light of God, in the peace of Christ.

The other letter discussed a life-long trouble. It spoke of a wife, self-forgetting, unchangeably devoted, born to be happy and to make happiness around her. What was her affliction ? It was not of the heroic type, one on which poets might lay wreaths, and sing,

> 'How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
> With all their country's wishes blest!'

It was just this, that in her isolated home, in a distant country, her every plan was persistently crossed, her every pleasure and comfort hurt, by the invariably selfish outlook of her husband, a man of blameless repute, in the common meaning of those words, but unable ever to see life through other eyes than his own.

I pitied the subject of the second letter much more than the writer of the first. The first sorrow was glorified by its conditions. The second had no light about it.

Your grief, friend and reader, is of the

glorified kind. Do not forget, amidst the worst realities of its pain, to be thankful for the beauty and dignity which courage and sacrifice have shed around it.

ii. Particularly, let me say this in the second place, cherish the thought of *the sacrifice*. This death, this wounding, this ruthless imprisoning, are things sanctified by an altar. At that altar, red with the blood of loss, sweet with the incense of surrender, two priests minister; one is that dear husband, son, or brother, the other is yourself. He gave himself, you have given him, for the infinitely good cause of a beloved and imperilled country, and for the sake of eternal right and truth, and liberty, and mercy. Is there anything in this world, or the other, more great, more purely noble, than a 'living sacrifice'? Reverence your own call, and your beloved one's call, to enter personally into its dignity and glory.

Be very sure that it is precious in the sight of God. What is the beating heart of the Christian faith? It is the suffering glory of a self-sacrificing God. The Father spared not His Son. The Son spared not Himself. The eternal heart is unspeakably near to you who have given up your

dear treasure, to fall, or to be broken, or to be taken. It is near, with the closeness of a supreme *fellow-feeling*, to him who gave himself, his all. True, the One Sacrifice offered for our sins stands unique and apart for ever. But let us be sure that our self-sacrificed Lord, while He gives all His mercy, absolutely free, to the humblest, simplest, least articulate, trust in Him, takes note and account, special and tender, of man's self-sacrifice for others and for right, and crowns it with His own peculiar praise.

Such sufferers are more than sufferers. All unselfish dying has something in it of the quality of martyrdom. An old friend of my own wrote the other day about his much-loved youngest brother's death. The lad went into the army and to the battle-field with no instinctive military ardour. It was not his way. He heard a clear call to give himself up to the tremendous danger because of a sacred cause. He had a solemn forecast that he would not return. But he took his place quietly and firmly in the fighting-line, believing it to be the will of God. His brother rightly says, 'I reckon him a true martyr.' So does his Saviour,

beyond a doubt. 'Well done, good and faithful'; that assuredly is said with an accent all its own to the servant who not only has faithfully traded with his talent but has willingly suffered in the work. Matt. xxv. 21

A striking and affecting picture has lately attracted wide attention. It is a good sign of our time that it was produced by a great daily newspaper. A young English soldier lies dead; the mortal bolt has pierced his forehead. He lies at the foot of a cross. His right hand, before life fled away, has somehow felt for and touched the foot, almost level with the ground, of the Crucified. The holy Face above, full of life, circled with its aureole, looks down upon the boy who has just poured out his soul to death; and the gaze is full of a solemn love, an untold benediction, as our Sacrifice contemplates the sacrifice at His feet.

This picture is a pregnant parable. The youthful countenance, beautiful in its simplicity and in its last sleep, the hand just touching our Salvation with that touch which is life eternal, and then that Other, that Sufferer supreme, nailed for sinners to the Tree, yet alive for evermore, and looking an unspoken and unspeakable *fellowship*

upon the fallen—it all seems eloquent of the whole truth you need, O sorrower for your beloved, truth great and radiant enough to 'quiet you in a death so noble.'

Again and yet again I have looked upon that picture. Its message seems always new, alive with the Gospel of peace and with the hope of glory. It is an inspiring thought that our glorious men, in their always growing numbers, seem to be more and more animated, deep underneath what one may call the cheerful reserve of the British soldier's spirit, with the thoughts which mean a sacrifice, 'acceptable, well-pleasing to God.' This was evidently the impression left on the Bishop of London's mind by his memorable Easter visit to the front.

He who set us the infinite example, as well as offered for us the infinite sacrifice, is surely gathering a glorious harvest of results 'out there' from the travail of His soul. And you also, my friend, you here at home, as you lay your suffering heart at the foot of His Cross, and say Amen over it, are one of those results.

iii. One sad thought, I well know, sighs and cries in many a stricken heart, the thought that the life, so strong, so gifted,

so full of possibilities, so loveable, so loving, *is wasted* now, cast useless on the 'scrap-heap' of the battle. That distress can rise into an agony, blinding the inner eyes even to the glory of heroic sacrifice which we have just thought of. If only your dear one had so died that all could see the splendid *importance* of his death! You could bear it a little better then. But he fell so soon, so little noticed, so pathetically unrecorded, except in the dreary list of 'casualties,' and on the aching tablet of your heart.

This, like every other phase of these sorrows, is wholly known to that CONSOLATOR of whom we shall say more presently. Tell HIM all this trouble, abating nothing, whatever else you do. But on the way to that interview, will you recall one or two sure facts? First of all, to the Christian soul there is no blind chance. Not fortuitously, but in the plan of God, one life passes away in babyhood, another at ninety. To Him, both lives are ordered and complete. High above all the heart-breaking 'second causes,' He, Father of mercies, *sanctioned* that desolating 'casualty.' And He will explain why, another day.

Next, be firm enough to recollect that,

in some hidden way, taking the whole scheme of things into account, that dear man was wanted to suffer for his country, that death of his was of consequence, as part of the price paid to safeguard helpless lives and homes. Life by life, we might go through our glorious army, looking into the true faces one by one, and praying for each in turn that either he might not die, or might so die that he should make a manifest contribution to victory. But then, where could we stop? Reason and faith alike would be adverse to such a prayer. Not the least heroic of our heroes are those who have quietly given away their inestimable lives, unsung, unknown, grandly content 'to die, if England lives.'

Lastly, be as sure as the immortal soul can be sure of anything, that, if you could draw back the curtain and see the continuity of that life with this, you would behold your lost treasure not lost but transferred, lifted to a loftier plane, to a larger field; present—exactly at the appointed and propitious moment in the plan of Heaven—where he was wanted *there*.

'Be not afraid; only believe.' We shall yet 'see, face to face.'

'Until the Day Dawn'

'Never again!' so speaks the sudden silence,
When round the hearth gathers each well-known face,—
But one is missing, and no future presence,
However dear, can fill that vacant place;
For ever shall the burning thought remain—
'Never, beloved, again! never again!'

'Never again!' so—but beyond our hearing—
Ring out far voices fading up the sky;
Never again shall earthly care and sorrow
Weigh down the wings that bear those souls on high;
Listen, oh earth, and hear that glorious strain—
'Never, never again! never again!'

A. A. Procter

VI

'Until the Day Dawn'

LET us follow out a little further these suggestions of consolation, these reasonings for the heart rather than the head, recollections which may lift us, and tranquillize us, and fit us all the better for a direct contemplation of Christ the Consoler Himself.

i. Take this then as a condition of your sorrow which is meant to solace and to lift you up—the fact that in this great valley of the shadow you are not alone. Your loss, your pain, brings you into a sacred fellowship, a large yet intimate companionship. 'The same afflictions are being accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' I know very well that in every great grief there is a secret something which is incommunicable. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.' Only the Maker of the heart, who having made it offers also to live in it, can quite enter into that recess. Yet it is a strong and tender consolation to our human souls to know that we do not pine alone in the midst of a surrounding

1 Pet. v. 9

Prov. xiv. 10

wilderness of comfortable and indifferent ease. There is a fine and beautiful free-masonry in the shared experience of affliction. Whatever else this gives you, it confers of necessity the high privilege of thinking of other children of sorrow, of praying for them, perhaps of speaking with them, not as an amateur but as an expert. You are a privileged person; you have title and qualification for entrance into the fraternity. You may without intrusion approach these others, not indeed to talk to them about your own troubles, at least not much, but to speak with them in a new way, intimate, reverent, in the living accent of knowledge, about what has fallen on *them*.

The time will come, as you use thus your experience of great pain, when you will even say to yourself that you would not, for all the world, *not* have suffered, and suffered greatly. Entering into the broken hearts of others with the talisman of your own trouble, thus consecrated to beautiful use, you will find a strange joy spring up amidst the pain. You will realize in a wonderful way that there is a high and holy *vocation* in sorrow; that you are getting out of it, what you could

not have without it, a sacerdotal call, a gift for service, a precious 'grace' to minister with to those who want precisely the ministry of a real and understanding fellowship. Very humbly, you will find yourself treading in the footprints of your Lord. 'In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted,' being tried and strained under the tremendous test of anguish, 'He is able to succour them that are tempted.' To Him the supreme joy that followed His great pain was just this, that He was able thus to 'succour,' as a sorrowless Saviour could not have done. Is it not spiritually good and beautiful so to follow the Son of God? Is it not the innermost privilege of those who are the sons of God in Him, to suffer that they may succour? No lower vocation is worthy of the greatness of their title. Upon every brow that can truly shew even the faintest reflection of His glory there will be found something, I think, like unto a crown of thorns.

Heb. ii. 18

Venture then to thank God, for your fellows' sake, that you are called to the fellowship of grief. And for your own life's sake too. Is it too much to say that, in our mortal state, the soul only gets to understand its own depths, and to

reach its own heights, through pain? A young singer, of superb organic power, was heard in one of her first appearances by a great master of music. 'She wants only one gift more to be the finest vocalist in Europe, and that is—a broken heart.'

ii. Yet another ray, a light of sacred hope, can be seen falling on your sorrow, if you look. Be sure of this, that there is no trouble, I dare to say not one, which may not prove in the end to be the seed, the embryo, of a joy. Take it as it is, with all its pain, to God, and so save it from being that really evil thing, a wasted sorrow—and it shall be thus. 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' So the Man of Sorrows, who is also the Prince of life and light, assured His followers, on the verge of His own great darkness and their desolation. Take note that He does not merely say that one day your sorrow shall be made to cease and then, after it, as the next change in a shifting scene, shall come a joy. No, the two things are in a connexion vital, necessary. There are, in a wonderful way, two aspects of one thing. The joy shall be the sorrow transfigured. It shall be such that without the antecedent pain it would not have been. You shall taste

John xvi. 20

the joy, and find it so pure, so true, so beautiful, so lofty, so fruitful of every growing and benignant good, that you could not bear to have missed the anguish which came before it.

It is a sure spiritual fact that, as sorrow endured with revolt or indifference can only harden, so sorrow hallowed can be the most purifying and enriching of all forces in human life. Accept it, understand it—I mean, understand that it has a purpose not of evil but of good—and it will be as in the often quoted parable. The refining of the silver is worked out in a glowing crucible. And the refiner sits by it and looks down upon it, and he hails the result achieved when in the much tried metal he sees the image of his face.

Wonderful insights into that secret have been given to suffering souls which I have known. 'I see now that I could not enter into life except as maimed.' The lips which said those words were young. I watched that happy morning turned early into the dusk of death. I knew how unspeakably much it had cost the sick one to lay every bright anticipation down at the feet of the Lord. But it was done. And the conviction, uttered from a deep soul

in these simple words, was no form of only passive resignation. It made a positive brightness in the shadows, a dawn arising in the West.

iii. Rapid lessons in the science of faith are often learnt in the school of suffering. One such lesson is how to keep trust firm and patience steady under the stress of apparently unanswered prayer. That is a stern and heavy trial. You have prayed, oh how earnestly, how persistently, with your hand upon the promises of God, and it has seemed to be in vain. In this war, you have cried out for the invisible shield to keep that beloved head; perhaps a strong conviction of the consent of the Hearer has seemed to come. And then arrives the notice from the War Office, with the great Chief's regret and sympathy; it is the death warrant of your hopes. Have you spoken to a deaf Heaven? Was it only the air into which you cried, and not the presence of God? Your anguish of questioning, be very sure, is understood and loved by Him. He is not angry. But He has wonderful reassurances to give you, as you listen at His feet. If He is indeed blessing your spirit through its other forms of pain, He will bless you through this.

'Though He slay me,' though He slay my beloved, which is harder, 'yet will I trust in Him.' Yes, simply because it is He. I have seen His face, therefore I will not be afraid of His hand, no, not though it 'takes away the desire of my eyes with a stroke,' and though He seems as if He did not hear, and would let me hear nothing. As sure as His existence is the fact of His hearing. As sure as His presence is the regard of His love and power. But He has the right, having shewn you something of Himself, to ask for your *unrelieved* submission, 'for a season, if need be.' Go to Him with your pang of perplexity about Him, and you will find that you can wait.

Job xiii. 15

Ezek. xxiv. 16

1 Pet. i. 6

When John the Baptist was murdered in the vaults of Herod's castle it was a tremendous instance of apparently useless and disappointed faith. To John himself his captivity had plainly been a very dark mystery. The Messiah, mighty to save, had left His own Forerunner alone, without the semblance of rescue, in the tyrant's hands. And the tyrant, and the tyrant's paramour, did their will upon him, and killed him, and his poor disciples knew not what to say. Happily

Matt. xv. 12

they knew, however, what to do. 'They went and told Jesus.' And we gather that they found rest and hope in simply doing that—because of the Person to whom they told it. Take their method, and you will find that the seemingly fruitless prayer shall even now begin to be fruitful. 'He gives us what we ask, or He gives us something better.' Yes, He does, if we lie quiet in His hands. 'Thou shalt know hereafter.'

John xiii. 7

'Thou shalt know hereafter.' This small book may possibly be read by, or read to, some young soldier called to the very heavy cross of early and lasting disablement; loss of limbs, loss of sight, loss of the mighty nervous force of glorious youth. To such I speak with a special humbleness of soul. Words cannot utter the reverence with which I think of such courage and such long, slow, sacrifice as theirs. To them what shall I say? I can teach no philosophy of Stoical endurance. I can but pronounce the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of sufferers, supremely intimate Partner with sufferers for ever. And I say, from His lips, that 'thou shalt know hereafter.'

You are invited, you are welcomed

with both His hands, to know HIM now. And you are promised that you shall know all about His ways with you hereafter. Great word and beautiful—HEREAFTER! Let Him, standing close beside you to-day, lay it upon your life's great wound.

O Life! without thy chequered scene
Of right and wrong, of weal and woe,
Success and failure, could a ground
For magnanimity be found,
For faith, 'mid ruined hopes serene?
Or whence could virtue flow?

WORDSWORTH

Christ the Sufferer

'THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL'

The gloomy Garden, blood-bedewed,
  The midnight scene of shame and scorn,
  The scourge, the wreath of rending thorn,
The tortures of the dreadful Rood;

These were the billows of Thy death,
  The storm-tost surface; but the cry,
  Thy spirit's woe, *Sabachthani*,
Rose from the ocean underneath.

Man has no line that sea to sound,
  The abyss of night—whose gulfs within
  Now lies entombed our weight of sin,
Forgotten, never to be found.

H. D.

VII

Christ the Sufferer

WE have walked together, my reader and I, up a series of steps. We have thought of various things which, now to the mind, now to the tried heart wounded with its 'war-sorrow,' may bring relief, reassurance, hope. Here, in this chapter, we reach the top of the steps, and approach a sanctuary built aloft and apart. We have considered reasons and truths, given us sometimes from within our human experience, sometimes from beyond it. We now approach and consider a Person. We draw near to the Name of all names, the Lord Jesus Christ. We come to receive on our troubled hearts the impression of what He is, what He has endured and known, what He can say and do, 'to bind up the broken-hearted.'

On a previous page we recollected the wide difference, in the science of the human soul, between the amateur and the expert in sorrow. We are coming now to the greatest Expert of all. For a little while

we will concentrate our souls on the experience which constitutes Him the Expert. Will it be lost time for you, O friend, to turn deliberately for the moment from your griefs to His ? I hope that it will only help us to come afterwards to your griefs with an anodyne which is nowhere found but in the sanctuary, and with the Person, before us now.

This sanctuary is altogether of its own kind. Here is no structure of pillared porticos and gilded roofs. We see a hill, gray with rock, green with the grasses of the spring. On its summit stands a Roman cross, hideous instrument of a death agonizing, and also shameful, to the uttermost ; the wood is red with recent blood. In the steep scarp of the little hill is a cave, whose mouth is carved to indicate a rich man's sepulchre. The orifice has for its door a large millstone (such is the shape), rolling in a hewn groove, and rolled now to the side, leaving the death-chamber open. By the opening stands 'one like unto the Son of Man' and Son of God. He was lately dead, the lacerated victim of that cross above Him. His, not many hours ago, was the corpse, rolled round and round with grave-cloths, laid in the tomb

beside Him. Now He is alive for evermore. He holds the keys of death, and of the hidden world. Yet more, He holds the keys of the human heart, and can open it, and no man shall shut it. He can enter it, and make His chosen and beloved home within it, passing in through the very breach which agony has wrought, and carrying in a wonderful healing with Him. Rev. i 18.

We need not hesitate to approach this Risen Christ. He is the most accessible of all beings. When He left that cavern —now long ago in history, but this event is always present—His very first act was to lay Himself out to heal a desolate woman's broken heart, and to fill her with the immense joy of Himself, her Lord, given back to her again. Let us draw very near to Him, my friend and me together. John xx 11–18

And first, being thus near, let us adore Him. Such is He that without 'reverence and godly fear' He cannot be understood. Only, we remember what godly fear is. It is not a shrinking apprehension; it is love upon its knees.

We adore Him then, getting down low at His feet. For this recent Victim, this occupant so lately of a grave, is no less

a being than eternal God made Man. The faith which we call Christian, from the very first days of its entrance into the world, (I say what is historically certain,) has had this for its living heart—the wonder, the glory, the beauty, of a self-sacrificing, suffering God made Man. It was God the Son of God who not only looked down but, for our sakes, came down—to the cradle, the workshop, the homeless wandering, the agony, the crucifixion. To save men He became Man. But never for a moment was He not God. Lord Jesus Christ, Friend, Brother, Sacrifice, Thou art also always our Maker, our eternal Master; we worship Thee.

But now, we look with reverent love upon His presence. Behold His hands, His feet, and the great scar of the lance in His sacred side. And are there no traces of the pitiless thorns of the crown upon his immortal brow? He has passed through the fire of utmost physical pain, this Lord of our salvation. We need not accumulate details. But let us not forget the facts of these six hours of incalculable anguish, endured in the publicity of a circle of spectators railing and insulting. And let us recollect, most gravely, what

all experience testifies, that physical sensibilities are always more alert and intense in proportion to physical refinement. And the *physique* of the Christ of God—immaculate, absolute in every development of faculty and sensation—what was the distress unspeakable inflicted upon It in the house of the High Priest, under the horrible lead-laden scourge of Pilate, and on the 'accursed tree'? He has been through it all, this gracious Being, standing close to us beside His garden-grave. True, it is past. Thanks be to God, it is past. I do not think I am alone in the feeling, when Good Friday is with us, and we have attended, perhaps, the Service of the Three Hours, that the striking at last of three o'clock brings with it a strong sense of bodily relief. 'Now doth the Lord in peace recline.' It is all over for Him. The sacred Body has endured, overcome, and sunk into the rest of death. Soon the cool grave will be ready, and the white linens will be wound about the limbs, and the spices will sweeten the air of the sepulchre, and He will lie long at rest. It is past. Yes, but do you remember that pregnant French saying: *Souffrir passe; avoir souffert demeure éternellement:*

'Suffering passes; to have suffered abides for ever'? The being which has once descended into the fiery bath of uttermost pain can never be the same again. Somehow it always keeps the scar.

But we are not yet at the end, by any means, of our contemplation of this adorable Sufferer. The tribulations of His holy body were unspeakable. I do not think it is too much to say, *remembering the sacred sensibilities of that Humanity*, that they were deeper, more intense and intimate, more searching in the secret consciousness, than what any other sufferer has ever known. Yet, after all, they were the surface of the Passion, not its depths. The Bible refers again and again, alike in the prophecies and in the history, to the mighty sorrows *of the soul* undergone by our Lord Christ. 'He poured out His soul unto death'; 'He shall see of the travail of His soul'; 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' It is remarkable that the nearest approach He made to sinking and giving way under the mystery of an infinite burthen was not when every nerve and bone were on the rack of the crucifixion, but when He knelt in the silent olive-garden, and the sweat of blood, forced

. liii. 12
tt. vi. 38
ke ii. 44

by the mind from the body, dropped upon the grass. Then, when the next day had worn to its terrible afternoon, one cry of immeasurable distress, and only one, was heard from the Cross. And it spoke not of a physical horror almost intolerable; nothing is clearer than that He bore *that*, when it came, with a firmness for which heroism is a feeble word. No, the overmastering, bewildering, blinding woe was of the spirit: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' Matt. xxvi. 46

In the ancient English 'Golden Litany' one suffrage runs: '*For Thy torments that were unknown.*'

Out of the vast and mysterious shadow which covered Jerusalem for three whole hours after midday, that cry, loud and long, broke from the unknown sufferings. Did it not indicate, as I suggested just now, that the tortures of the unsinning body of the Lord were indeed as the mighty billows, but that the woe of His soul was as the abysmal depths of the central ocean, underneath all waves, an unsounded night of waters?

And He, upon the Cross, encountered both sorts of suffering together. Great pain is a great trial when a man is ever so well off

in respect of mental peace. Great mental misery is terrible when the physical health is ever so sound, and not an ache troubles joint or limb. But the two forms of ill, coming together, are indeed formidable to man. And the Man of men endured them both, in their awful maximum, at once.

Avoir souffert demeure éternellement. We give humble thanks that our Redeemer's *Lama sabachthani*, once uttered, is gone and done. It is even so. But to have had that cry forced from His soul under that black eclipse—this lasts, and will last for ever, even in the coming Heaven. His redeemed will never forget it. They will sing eternally, in the music of a life tuned to the glory of the will of God, that He is worthy *who was slain*, and slain with such a death. And He will never forget it. It is part of His being, for ever, to have suffered, and to have suffered so; the supreme Expert in the lore of grief.

Rev. v. 9, 12

Once, in St. Paul's Cathedral, I was listening to the magnificent chanting of the Nicene Creed. The setting—I know not now who was the composer—reiterated and lingered over that one clause, '*He suffered.*' 'He suffered, He suffered'; it was as if the singers could not get themselves

away from the possessing word. They were but preluding the song of Heaven. The Lord—whom we shall worship, and rejoice in, and serve, for ever—He is for ever He who suffered, and suffered so that to have suffered abides in Him in power through all the endless age.

To the still wrestlings of the lonely heart
  He doth impart
The virtue of His midnight agony,
  When none was nigh,
Save God and one good angel, to assuage
  The tempest's rage.

KEBLE

Christ the Consoler

Our Fellow-Sufferer yet retains
A fellow-feeling of our pains,
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies, and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows had a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief.

With boldness therefore at the throne
Let us make all our sorrows known,
And ask the aids of heavenly power
To help us in the evil hour.

MICHAEL BRUCE

VIII

Christ the Consoler

WE have approached our most blessed Lord beside His Cross and His grave. We have adored Him as our self-sacrificing, suffering, God Incarnate. We have deliberately remembered that for Him supremely, as for every bearer of great pain, 'to have suffered abides for ever.' What He has gone through, what He has undergone, that tremendous 'cup' which He consented, after agony, to drink to the dregs—it is all part of His being, to-day and everlastingly.

Holy Scripture tells us great things about the results of that suffering, for us and our salvation. It makes it as clear as the noon that the Cross was endured because of our sins, and that our sins, because of the Cross, find, when we yield to God, a willing and wonderful pardon and oblivion, impossible otherwise. That atoning work, that 'peace through the Col. i. 2
blood of the cross,' who shall speak worthily of its glory? Shall our narrow thoughts

dare to limit the gladness and the largeness of that mercy, the fulness of the stream of life and love poured down the channel which was cleft once for all in the Rock of Ages ?

But just now we are thinking not of the redeeming virtue of the crucified Lord. Rather, we are looking on Him as wonderfully fitted, by the 'unknown' sufferings of His sacrifice, to be CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR. We have thought about His heart, broken for our sakes, only that we may get into the living depths of the truth that He now is able, indeed able, 'to bind up the broken-hearted.'

sa. xi. 1

To get thus at Him we have together climbed the steps of some subordinate reasons for hope and cheer, advancing all the while towards the sanctuary of peace at the top. And here, on the quiet summit, we find, as we have seen already, not a truth merely but a Person. Strong in His personal love and willingness, rich with His unspeakably personal experience, He is able to 'be touched with the feeling of our infirmities' and our wounds. He is 'able to save, to the uttermost,' from all their wearinesses and their heavy loads, those who will let Him have His way. He is

Heb. iv. 5

Heb. vii. 25

able, with personal methods of His own, to transfigure sorrows into joys. Consider HIM. Let it sink always deeper into your torn and tired spirit that such a Person exists, that *this* Person exists—living, loving, accessible. He is 'the Man at the Gate' whom readers of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' will remember. 'Here is a poor burthened sinner,' said the Pilgrim; 'I would know, Sir, if you are willing to let me in.' 'Here,' let us say, 'are stricken and broken hearts; we have heard, Sir, that your heart was once broken, and has stood open ever since, and that its great rift is turned into a gate by which men go in and find peace. We would know if you are willing to let us in.'

'I am willing with all my heart,' said the Man; and with that He opened the gate.

Nothing is more characteristic of this Man than that He should welcome troubled people to come as close to Him as possible. He exists to be intimately approachable. '*Come unto me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.' This is an invitation as inclusive as it is pressing. It is often, and most rightly, read as a call to the sin-burthened soul to come,

Matt. xi 28

not to 'tarry till 'tis better,' but to come *at once* into contact with Him who suffered so much on purpose that the man might at once find all forgiven, and begin at once to see the secret how to tread the forgiven evils underfoot. But the Lord does not limit His call so. He who bore our sins tasted our sorrows, and is willing to deal with them also: 'I am willing with all my heart,' saith He. It is His function, His *métier*, if I may dare to use the word. It is His commission; so he says Himself; His Father has expressly given it Him to do; '*He hath sent me* to bind up the brokenhearted.' And He who sent Him has qualified Him for the work—how? By making Him the great Expert. He 'made the Captain of our salvation perfect' for His function 'through sufferings.'

Shall I try to divine, heart-wounded friend, how He will do it in your case? I can at best but guess, at least as to the order and detail. For He is so perfect a sympathizer, so large of insight and experience, that He has His special touch and way with every individual. But we may be fairly sure that somewhere into His personal treatment of you something of these following elements will enter.

i. He will apply to your aching and bleeding spirit the great anodyne of the thought that He knows, as the Sufferer-in-chief alone can know, all about it. He will not say to you, as He touches your spirit with His, that He has passed through infinitely more pain, and that therefore you must not overestimate yours. He is a Consoler too skilful, because too wholly loving, for such ruthless sorts of comfort. In our human experiences, those who have borne great sorrows greatly are often just the tenderest—I had almost said the humblest—consolers of, let us say, the cries and tears of a little girl. They have known sorrow so large that it has filled their whole large sky. And it is when sorrow seems *to fill* the sphere, and we cannot look round its edge, that it presses hard as death. Well, the little girl's trouble seems to her to fill all her little sky; is it not so with the children's passionate griefs? And this the deep elder heart knows, and talks to the child about the happiness so sure to come soon from beyond, as if a child were speaking, yet with the tender power of the man's own greater suffering, rightly borne. Such, multiplied by infinity, is the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ, eternally

perfect as a sympathizer, perfect through His own sufferings, will lay Himself beside your trouble. He will not underweigh one grain of it. He will see more in it than even you do. He will reverence it. And He will give you time, in His great gentleness, to take home to your very centre the consolation of having close beside you a God and Lord who is your Companion in the experience of tears, of bewilderment, of blinding darkness, of the awful sense of desolation, and who now,
xxi. while Himself 'most blessed for ever,' has that experience for ever woven into His being.

ii. Another element of the consolations of our Fellow-Sufferer will come from the side of His greatness. Not the greatness which awes and terrifies; not at all. I mean the greatness of Him who, having borne *and transcended* the 'unknown' sorrows, can bid you trust Him when He tells you that for you, as for Him, the light will yet overwhelm the darkness, the sorrow shall be turned into joy. He has the right to be believed, without elaborate explanations. For He stands where He can see above all clouds—His own clouds first, and then yours. Scripture assures us that He Him-

self, 'in the days of His flesh,' overcame *by reliance without sight.* He, the Christ, 'walked by faith, not sight.' He was 'the leader and perfecter of faith,'[1] in other words, the supreme Believer. 'For the joy that was set before Him,' a joy not present, not visible, but believed in, 'He endured the Cross.' Now, crowned with that joy, but also with the eternal fact that He wore the thorns, He asks you to take His word for it that the like transfiguration, worked out by Him, is to come to you. He asks you, in your turn, Heb. xii. 2

> 'To trace the rainbow through the rain,
> And feel the promise is not vain
> That morn shall tearless be.'

'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.' He gives you that prospect on the word of Himself, supreme believing Sufferer, Lover of your soul, Master of your life. John xiii. 7

iii. As he accustoms you to His companionship, and draws more and more out of you your heart's communicating power, He will let you feel the vivid solace of 'conversation' with Him. As in our earthly intercourse, so in this walking—and talking

[1] The word 'our' before 'faith' is absent in the Greek.

—with God Incarnate, it is not only through information and explanation that we get our troubles calmed. Calm comes through the healing freedom of intercourse, through speaking all out to a trusted soul, nobler than our own. We noticed on a previous page how John the Baptist's disciples got an anodyne to their woe by going and telling Jesus. Laid upon His heart, the trouble was already partly drawn away from theirs. Tell the great Sufferer all about your suffering. Let Him hear the inmost and the worst of it, the wreck of your home, the paralysis of your hopes, the harsh daily anxieties that only make sorrow more crude and heavy, the mysteries and riddles about your beloved ones gone. He knows everything; but He wants you to tell Him. He sees the unmeasured joy yet to come which will explain why He saw it worth while to let the dreadful antecedent blow fall on you. But He knows that you do not see it. And He wants you to use Him meantime as the receptacle for your burthen, entrusted with all the mystery, and so with the worst of the pang.

ıtt. v. 12

iv. Lastly, to take one final suggestion out of the innumerable methods of His love,

He will bind up the broken heart by teaching the sorrower, in His own way, to see the sorrow from a new point of view. In Nature, it is possible for new effects of light, altered angles of vision, to transform a frowning cliff, or a cloud-laden threatening sky, into the semblance of a ladder built from earth to heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ can so give you a new perspective, can so shed the light of His presence, and of the prospects of His coming glory, over your trouble, that, while it is by no means melted away, it yet shall be transfigured. You shall see its hidden virtues shining out already, as you realize, perhaps on a sudden, how it, and it alone, is qualifying you for a nobler service of others and a new sort of glorification of God. And you shall see it also in its relation to the eternal peace and joy—the rocky ladder to the Father's house, the crosswise hammer that is beating out the crown.

We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Passing Souls

I would not exchange my dead son for any living son in Christendom.

James, First Duke of Ormonde

I have but Thee, my Father! let Thy Spirit
Be with me then, to comfort and uphold;
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm, I merit,
Nor street of shining gold.

Suffice it if—my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through Thy abounding grace—
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place;

Some humble door among Thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease,
And flows for ever through Heaven's green expansions
The river of Thy peace.

Whittier

IX

Passing Souls

LET me transcribe a hymn[1] lately given me :—

'For the passing Souls we pray;
Saviour, meet them on their way;
Let their trust lay hold on Thee
Ere they touch Eternity.

'Holy counsels long forgot
Breathe again 'mid shell and shot;
Through the mists of life's last pain
None shall look to Thee in vain.

'To the hearts that know Thee, Lord,
Thou wilt speak through flood or sword;
Just beyond the cannons' roar
Thou art on that further shore.

'For the passing Souls we pray;
Saviour, meet them on their way;
Thou wilt hear our yearning call
Who hast loved and died for all.'

Question upon question comes whispering into the bereaved heart. Death looks so strangely like the end of all; is

[1] By Lady Cooter

it so? Is there indeed survival, so that the self outsoars that seeming end? If so, is it in consciousness that it goes forth? And what do we know of that other life, its conditions, its scenery, its occupations, its continuity with the past, its difference, its transcendence? Can we hold communion, intercourse of spirit, with the dear outgoers? Can we do anything for them? Can we look forward with assurance to reunion, to recognition?

Again, what shall we think about the spiritual state in which they went out? Were they ready for the great transition, into the unseen and eternal, the region where all things seem as they are indeed, and evil and good are not mingled and confused as here? Were they prepared to meet God?

I have written down a long list of questions. Not that I may try to answer them one by one, and say precisely that *this* is the solution. Not one of these is there which does not 'go off into mystery.' Very few questions about things invisible admit of answers neatly rounded off. 'I know in part'; 'we see through a glass, darkly.'

: Cor. xiii. 12

But some reverent answers 'in part'

are possible, and some humblest guesses and suggestions. Let me attempt a little thus, in this chapter and in the next. To begin at the end, with that tender, awestruck asking, *Was he ready* ? I assume the question to be put, deep in the silent heart, in some case where longing affection hesitates to say that in life the beloved one showed that he loved God.

Let me not minister too easily and lightly to such a soul-penetrating care. Nothing is more evident in the Bible than its insistent, its *anxious*, appeal to come, and come now, to the open arms of the Lord; to 'choose life'; to 'make your calling sure'; to 'fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' And the Book is, to say the least of it, profoundly reserved as to saving processes *beginning after* the parting of soul and body, that complex state of our being with which I think revelation closely connects the laying of the lines of character. But on the other hand some incontestable certainties lie upon the side of humble and hopeful encouragement. It is not we who are to limit 'the mercy of the Merciful.' It is not our function to prescribe to Him the precise methods in which He shall be pleased to

Deut. xxx. 19
2 Pet. i. 10
Heb. vi. 18

bring the passing soul and the sacrifice of Calvary together. Assuredly the hem of the garment of His Son has long fringes. It is certain that the Holy One 'delights in mercy,' that He understands every extenuating circumstance, and is glad to remember it, that it is grievous to Him that 'the souls should fail before Him.' It is certain that He will save to the uttermost that may be, and that His resources are past our finding out.

Micah vii. 18

Isa. lvii. 16

Human experience gives us one far-reaching suggestion as to the possible action of 'the mercy of the Merciful' in the very article of death. The verse is well known :—

> 'Betwixt the stirrup and the ground
> Mercy I sought, mercy I found.'

I can add to this an incident, told me by a friend, formerly vicar of the Essex parish where it occurred. A woman of some sixty years died there in his time. She was well known to pastor and people as a loving Christian soul, true in life and death. In youth she had been violently passionate. One day, half demented with anger, she ran from the cottage, and threw herself down the open well—that familiar thing in East

Anglian gardens. Almost dead, she was drawn up, and slowly recovered her senses. Her first words were, 'If I had died in the well I know I should have been saved; as I was falling down, I remembered all mother taught me, and I believed it with all my heart.' Forty years, lived 'in newness of life,' were the sequel of those moments.

The inconceivable but proved rapidity of some dreams may help us to understand that, in the mysterious borderlands of conscious life, whole processes of spiritual change are possible, 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye'; almost as if time were another thing as it touches eternity.

To return, for a moment, to thoughts written on a previous page. Let us be sure, across all mysteries, that the Merciful will not have *less* mercy than His wont when the passing soul, more or less consciously, is giving itself in the agony of battle for the lives and homes of others.

I remember long ago hearing a Christian man, as lofty and as orthodox a believer as I have ever known, reading aloud, with a voice often broken, a rough, powerful American ballad, telling of the death of the apparently godless stoker of a Mississippi

steamer, who somehow saved boat and crew from a great explosion at the cost of his own certain death. It ended:—

> 'And Christ ain't a-goin' to be too hard
> On a man as died for men.'

Let us never, for one moment, for ourselves, in our normal hour, dare, ever so little, *to trifle with the mercy of God.* But it is another thing to remember that mercy over a beloved life suddenly put out.

With a trembling but holy hope, looking to the Crucified and Risen, we commit the soul, and commit our hearts, to the hands, infinitely kind, of 'a faithful Creator.'

Upon the grave and tender problem of prayer for the departed, the Bible, so I venture to think, after long reflection, is absolutely reserved. I cannot think therefore that the warrant for such prayer is a fact of revelation. Christians who so pray should have a reverent regard, when there is any occasion for such a feeling, for the misgivings of others, in whom, very probably, the thought of spiritual communion with their vanished ones is just as strong and warm as in themselves, and who continually greet them in the Lord, reaching them in Him through the veil. Only,

they do not see the warrant for intercessory prayer for them.

They do think, perhaps, and most justly, that at least the too easy use of such prayer may tend *to muffle* the divine appeals to man to seek salvation *to-day*.

Misgivings about prayer for the dead are wholly justified, if the prayer in question means necessarily prayer for deliverance from gloom and pain, rather than a breath of loving aspiration sent after the spirit into its abode of light, asking, as a certainty may be asked for, for the perpetual growth in the emancipated being of the graces and the bliss of the heavenly rest, and its holy progress and education in the knowledge of its Lord. It is undoubted that such prayer for the departed is found in the fragmentary remains of very early Christian literature, certainly within half a century of the last apostles. Never there, nor ever in the inscriptions of the Roman catacombs, I think, does it suggest a purgatorial belief. It might almost be said to be, as regards its spirit, as much salutation and aspiration as petition. But in form it is prayer. And I for one cannot condemn such exercises of the soul, where reverent thought

invites to it, in the private devotions of a Christian.[1]

Before me lies a prayer composed for such private use. It is beautiful in its restraint and tenderness. 'Grant that [his] life may unfold itself in Thy sight, and find a sweet employment in the spacious fields of eternity. . . . Tell [him], gracious Lord, if it may be, how much I love [him] . . . and long to see [him] again; and, if there be ways in which [he] may come, . . . grant me a sense of [his] presence, in such a degree as Thy laws permit. . . . Pardon, O gracious Lord and Father, whatever is amiss in this my prayer, and let Thy will be done; for my will is blind and erring, but Thine is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; through Jesus Christ out Lord. Amen.'

One prayer on behalf of the sacred Dead lies, beyond all question, within our Christian right. It is the prayer that the absent Lord would hasten His coming, descending with joy to His waiting Church, bringing with Him 'them also which sleep in Jesus.' Then, and not till then, will

1 Thess. iv. 14

[1] Its introduction into public worship is, in view of differing beliefs, another matter, on which I do not speak here.

their being, even as ours, receive its 'perfect consummation and bliss, both in *body* and soul.' Resurrection will complete the receptacle of the eternal life and joy, and so the whole range of the heavenly happiness will begin to be realized. For this, in their dear interest, we pray.

Amen, even so; for their final glory, as for ours, COME, LORD JESUS!

Shudder not to pass the stream;
Venture all thy care on Him,
Him whose dying love and power
Stilled its tossing, hushed its roar;
Safe is the expanded wave,
Gentle as a summer's eve;
Not one object of His care
Ever suffered shipwreck there.

TOPLADY

'With Christ'

'FAR BETTER'

Phil. i. 21, 23

Aye, think of all things at the best; in one fair thought unite
All purest joys of sense and soul, all earthly love and light;
Bid Hope and Memory meet at length and knit their wreaths in one,
And o'er them shed the tenderest light of Fancy's inner sun;

Yet bind the truth upon thy brow and clasp it to thy heart,
And then nor grief nor gladness here shall claim too great a part—
All radiance of this lower sky is to that glory dim;
Far better to depart it is, for we shall be with Him.

H. D.

'ILS NOUS ONT DEVANCÉS'

Qu'il est doux dans les cieux, le réveil des fidèles!
Qu'avec ravissement, autour de Dieu pressés,
Ils unissent au son des harpes immortelles
Les hymnes de l'amour ici bas commencés!
Amis, joignons nos voix à leurs voix fraternelles:
Ils ne sont pas perdus, ils nous ont devancés.

VINET

X

'With Christ'

WE have been thinking, with reverence and great tenderness of spirit, about the passing of beloved souls. Let us follow the track further into the world of light. Let us interrogate anew our oracle, that Book which is always proving itself to be now, what it was to the Son of Man Himself, nothing less than God's revealing Word. What has it to tell us of the life of souls, of that state in which the departed Christian wakes again?

Here, as so often, the Bible is reserved. Its trustworthiness comes out not a little in its persistent refusal to satisfy mere curiosity, to pretend to lift the veil freely, to tell us, as apocryphal 'apocalypses' so often do, a host of details about the marvels of another life. But all the more precious are the disclosures, however guarded, which we do find in the Bible. We are meant entirely to trust them. We are meant to be sure that the light of which such glimpses are given is even larger and more beautiful than the glimpses.

Of the fact of conscious personal survival the Book leaves not a doubt, as it sheds its full illumination, in the New Testament, on 'life and immortality.' The Lord Jesus affirms it in a hundred ways, direct and indirect. His severest warnings look beyond the body's death to the experiences of the soul. His parables move familiarly in the unseen state. Lazarus and Dives survive, conscious, recollecting, fully themselves. The Patriarchs subsist, after ages of time, related still, spirit to spirit, to God. 'When ye fail' (or rather, so the true reading runs, 'when it fails,' when earthly wealth goes from you at death), then, if you have used your talent for others' good, those others, gone before, 'shall receive you into the eternal habitations.' A welcome will await you then and there, personal, recognizing, delighted.

Listen to the dying Christ Himself. His own time is near. He will soon, with His final breath, 'commit His spirit,' as it goes out, to the hands of His Father. But first He speaks to the penitent beside Him. For this man, in so many words, He not only assumes survival; He tells him that the survival shall be consciously, inconceivably, im-

mediately, happy: 'To-day shalt thou be, with me, in Paradise.' He bequeaths to His apostles the same message of immortality. He teaches Paul to anticipate the instant sequel of death in words of blissful life: 'To depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better'; 'We are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' Long before those words were written, the Christ had personally opened the door of the unseen to His martyr Stephen. And the man 'fell asleep' amidst the battering stones, saying, 'Receive my spirit,' to a Lord visibly risen from the throne of God to meet him. Later again, a Christian prophet (we shall know his name hereafter) wrote the great Epistle to the Hebrews. He also had commission to lift a corner of the veil, and he lets a long ray of light shine through. 'Ye are come,' in Christ, 'to the spirits of the just made perfect.' Wonderful words, pregnant of life and love! In one breath they tell us of the personal subsistence of the holy dead, and also of our spiritual proximity to them, a nearness and companionship of untold intimacy and affection, here, now, before we die.

Luke xxiii. 43

Phil. i. 23

2 Cor. v. 8

Acts vii. 55, 60

Heb. xii. 23

That the being of man is greater than

death, that it must, in the nature of God's plan for it, transcend death, is in one respect the message of literally the whole Bible. For the whole Bible is the record of God's unceasing and intimate concern about man, and of His dealings with man. Next to God, man is the great mystery and message of the Bible. And the being who can so occupy his eternal Maker is, whatever else he is, no creature of an hour; he is such that he is capable of spirit-relations with the Infinite One. So the Lord reasons, confuting the misguided Sadducees: 'God is not the *God of* the dead,' the extinct, 'but of the living.' Thus this Book of mystery and of light meets the wistful heart of man, hungry with its 'appetite of immortality.' It finds man weaving his web of intellectual and inferential 'intimations' of a future life. And, in the name of the Man who died and rose again, and who lives above death for ever, it simply tells man that he is immortal. Rather, it takes this for granted as a basal fact, and develops it into a revelation of holiness and bliss.

Matt. xii. 32

And now, what are these developments, these guarded, sparing, but most precious disclosures of the sequel of the Christian's death?

i. The spirit leaves the mortal body. The conscious self is 'absent from the body,' or, to render St. Paul's Greek more exactly, it 'leaves its home in the body.' 2 Cor. v. 8

Between death and resurrection *that* connexion is broken. But we are not to assume for certain that the outgoer is therefore formless, bodiless. Some Christian thinkers have explained, I think with reason, the 'house not made with hands' to be the form, the vehicle, of our intermediate state. Such a form Moses must have worn in the Transfiguration hour. The angels have power to 'materialize' a bodily vehicle. The human spirit, yonder, may well have a similar privilege, the possession of an organ for its life and action, pending the resurrection glory. 2 Cor. v. 1

ii. That beyond the veil *light* reigns we are to be quite sure. Whittier is true to revelation when he says that

'Death is a covered way which opens into light.'

It is a tunnel, a very short tunnel, with a summer landscape at the far end. On the outside of the tunnel the whole day is shining all the while. And the day is breaking already, from the end, into the darkness underneath the roof.

Beyond the shadow there is not less life but more. Your beloved one who has vanished there has passed up, not down. He is not wasted; he is advanced. 'She lives above the stars,' is the phrase of one epitaph in the catacombs. The ultimate *best* is not yet come; this waits for resurrection. But wonderful is the spirit's present *good*. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' what it is to be. But we have revelation, as we have seen already, for the
Phil. i. 23 fact that it is 'far better' than our best below.

Wonderful visions have been given of that 'good,' now and then, to passing souls. Such was the ineffable insight, in one case known to me, that it kept the young man alive on his last bed three days longer, said the doctors, than he had any physical right to live. 'Is this really the river?' he said; 'well, it is neither deep nor dark.' So, long before, Henry Venn the elder, allowed to look under the lifted veil, began to feel the immortal life already in him. 'Sir,' said his physician, 'with these joyful feelings you cannot die.'

A Scottish believer, strong, self-restrained, a characteristic son of the Presbyterian Church, the late Dr. Kalley, approached

his end, an aged man. As a veteran medical practitioner, he calmly told his wife, who told my informant, how he must expect to die suddenly, but that he hoped to give her notice. One day he laid his hand on her arm, said the words, 'Oh my dear wife!' and immediately expired. The words and the manner, said Mrs. Kalley, were precisely those with which, years before, during a tour they took in the Highlands, he touched her arm and bade her look, when suddenly a mountain view of entrancing grandeur broke upon them.

iii. There will be light there, and so indeed there will be *sight*. This is revealed in many places of the Book. Take one only, that pregnant passage (we have referred to it twice already) where St. Paul discourses on the 'dissolution' of 'the earthly house of this tabernacle,' and the sequel. Incidentally he says of our present state, *as contrasted with the state after dissolution*, that 'we walk by faith, not by sight,' or, to translate with more precision, 'not by object visible.' The holy logic works out to the conclusion that there, 'absent from the body,' the Christian does 'walk by object visible.' He sees, he sees indeed. 2 Cor. v. 1–7

iv. This light and this sight are

experienced in peace and rest. Quite incidentally, but how significantly, this is given us, for instance, in that apostolic word, 'Remember them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also *in the body*.' 'Absent from the body,' then, the Christian soul has done with adversity. 'He shall enter into peace'; 'they rest.' Ah, what that repose will be to some passing souls! I recall the dying words of one most laborious Christian layman; 'I shall ask just to rest, for a hundred years.' I do not think, by the way, that he would need it; that rest will be so deep that it need not be long. But there may well be an intense while conscious quiescence for a season, the stress over. 'No more fighting there,' was Charles Kingsley's thought as he prepared to pass away.

Heb. xiii.

Isa. lvii. 2

Rev. xiv. 13

Repose, assuredly, will in one aspect be permanent, unending. Friction, physical and moral, will be gone. And where friction goes there action, however intense, however large, however long, will carry at its heart a repose unspeakable.

v. Action, surely, there will be. I do not wish to deal much in conjecture. But I think that the divine economy of

power suggests that the holy multitudes of that unseen life, vast beyond our numbering, cannot possibly be left unused, day and year, age after age, by Him who is 'Lord both of the dead and living.' That word *Lord*—does it not suggest, by correspondence, a life of *service* on the part of His vassals? Not without warrant does Trench write, in his noble poem, 'On an Early Death,' a poem which is full all through of messages of the highest hope and cheer :— Rom. xiv. 9

> 'Doubt not but that in the worlds above
> There must be other offices of love;
> That other tasks and ministries there are,
> Since it is promised that His servants there
> Shall serve Him still.'

Thought soon fails us when we try to conjecture what those offices and ministries may be. We long to look but for a moment within the thin but opaque curtain. We want greatly to know whether it is given to them to do anything like angelic ministry, and to bless us below with their dear activities, watching and working for our good. That they remember us, and with love, is quite certain. If Dives remembered, and was reminded, did not Lazarus also? Were not his sinless sympathies and desires

continually with those he left in life, and were they not often spoken out before his Lord ?

We saw just now that we 'are come unto the spirits of the just.' Then they are come unto us. They are not remote in space, nor severed from us in date. In the times and places of the spirit they are not memories but presences.

> 'Tis but the Lord that walks between,
> And they His other side.'

True it is that, by a mysterious law, the benignant discipline of which we shall understand hereafter, they are silent to us. But we are not therefore to be silent to them. Every day of our lives let us greet them. Let us tell them how dear they are to us. Let us let them know what a power they are upon us. Let us tell them what we think about them, and ask for them ; above all, how we pray continually for the dawn of that eternal morning when the Lord will bring them again with Him. Let us cheerfully think and speak of our own passing through the veil one day to be with them, taking our place in our turn in the holy community. Let us bid them meet us at the door of 'the eternal

tabernacles'—which will all the more be Home because they are there.

A living and uplifting anticipation will grow upon us from such converse. It will prepare us, may we not think? for all the more perfect recognition and companionship when we meet again, and find them wonderfully grown in the spirit's life. Death fixes lines, but indeed it does not crystallize and stay development. The bud then will be the flower, the flower the fruit. In the better life there is indeed no age; the 'everlasting spring' reigns and shines not only in the Garden but in its denizens. But enrichment will go on for evermore.

Ah, what will it be to meet them in that life! There they, and we, shall be wholly pure, for

> 'One sight of Jesus as He is
> Will strike all sin for ever dead.'

There 'adversity,' as we have seen, will be over. There tears are all exhaled into the sunlight of the Presence. But there peace and joy are so holy that they can carry on and glorify the disciplinary work of pain—deepening, lifting up, opening every sympathy, exalting every grace. There the knowledge of the Blessed,

no more 'in part,' will always expand, in the school of Him who said that 'thou shalt know hereafter.' But it will wear always a beauty of love and humbleness which will keep the blight of mental pride infinitely far away. There, as it has been said, eyes will have keener and fuller vision by far than all our optical instruments. Yet always they will beam virtue and affection out, as they drink knowledge in.

vi. But the supreme and crowning certainty about the Christian's life after death is summed in those two words, 'WITH CHRIST.' That was the Lord's own promise from the Cross. It was made, let us remember, not to a Stephen, not to a John, but to the dying thief: 'Today shalt thou be in Paradise,' in the heavenly Garden, 'with me.' Wonderful is that word 'today,' with its immediateness of bliss. Wonderful is that word 'Paradise,' charged with every radiant idea of the beautiful in the environment of the soul. But the living sun, which makes the glory of it all, is these words, 'with me.' So it is again and again, in passages which we have taken note of already. 'To depart, and to be with Christ'; 'We are willing to leave home in the body and to get home to the

Lord.' The ultimate bliss of resurrection has no higher promise in kind than this promise of the intermediate state: 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.' 1 Thess iv. 17

Think of it, O friend, over the grave of your beloved. In a sense newly and unimaginably vivid, immediate, he is now and for ever face to face with his Redeemer. All that he is, thinks, feels, enjoys, desires, is steeped in this astonishing reality, the unveiled Presence. Even here, let us boldly say, he loved his Lord more than he knew; and the love which he knew was a great love. But now he has got full sight of Him; he is consciously quite close to Him; he suns himself, and expands from purity to purity, from glorious grace to grace, in that beatific sight and company. He begins indeed to be like Him, for he sees Him as He is. 1 John iii. 2 He begins the endless happiness of shewing Him what he thinks of Him, what rapture there is for him in the wonderful 'beauty of his King,' in the unspeakable love of his King, who suffered for him the unknown sorrows, and who now must needs have him close to Him for evermore. Isa. xxxiii.

Such is that presence with Christ that it is 'far better,' 'far, far better' says

St. Paul. And better far—than what? Than this life's sighs and sorrows? No; than this life's holiest and fullest happiness. The apostle has just spoken of *this* life in
il. i. 21 glorious terms; 'to me to live is Christ.' But *that* life, the life waiting for him when he 'departs,' is to be such, because it is so wonderfully and immediately 'with Christ,' that it will be 'far, far better' than even that happy antecedent state.

What must the results be of that holy and unclouded company-keeping! What depths and heights of growth! What outshining more and more of the likeness of the Beloved in the lover, of the Worshipped in the happy worshipper!

What a region of praise and singing must be the walks and bowers of that great
Rev. Garden, which the last vision of the Bible
7 with places in the midst of the City of the saints!
ii. 2 It is no scene of contemplation only, hushed and solemn. The inhabitants begin already
a. to wear the 'everlasting joy upon their
xv. 10 heads'; they make their singing heard aloud on the celestial Sion.

'O ye Spirits and Souls of the Righteous, bless ye the Lord; praise Him and magnify Him for ever.'

'Brought again with Him'

'WE THINK OF THEE'

We think of thee, dear one, when the summer noon
shines bright,
And all the trees stand still in the solemn hush of light;
We think of thee, dear one, when the long day is
done,
And the land lies dark 'twixt the full moon and the
rose of the vanished sun.

. . . . . .

We think of thee in sorrow, and we think of thee in
mirth,
And when we muse on Heaven, and when on the green
fair earth;
A thousand thoughts, as the hours fleet, rise in our
souls and sink,
But with them all, and in them all, of our dear one still
we think.

And thy thoughts of us, dear one, we know they do not
fail;
Thou thinkest of us and our shadows in the light
within the veil;
The veil trembles already with thoughts from that
side and this,
And soon it will tremble asunder, and leave us together
in bliss.

H. D.

XI

'Brought again with Him'

THE words above are borrowed from that paragraph, radiant with an eternal promise, where St. Paul tells the Thessalonians why they should 'not sorrow' without hope 'for their beloved who are asleep.' Not that they are not to sorrow. They are the followers of One who, out of His deep manhood, shed tears beside the very grave He was about to open. But hope is to shine through the sorrow. And by hope, what does the Gospel mean? Not a vague forecast, a something just better than a doubt, but an expectancy well grounded on a promise. In the Bible,

1 Thess. iv. 13–18

John xi. 35

'Hope is Faith, with her feet on the rock, and her face to the morning.'

What is the promise here beneath those feet? The Lord's glorious Return, and the return along with Him of 'them that sleep.' To that wonderful Coming the first sequel, we read, will be a rapturous meeting. The risen and the surviving will gather, face to face, all transfigured: 'we shall be

caught up, together with them, to meet the Lord.' Then again will follow the enjoyment of a Presence, satisfying, altogether happy; 'so shall we ever be with the Lord.' The 'perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul,' of which we are taught to speak beside the open grave, will have come in thus at last. And its vital factors will be two, each of them a wonderful companionship, an everlasting embrace of life and love, possessing the whole redeemed being. 'We' shall be 'together with them.' 'We' and 'they,' in the fulness of the life of the world to come, shall be 'ever with the Lord.'

That prospect, the *Parousia*, the Arrival, of our ascended Lord, shines always in the foreground of the New Testament. For one allusion to the holy intermediate state there are many to the Coming, to the resurrection of the dead, so profoundly connected with the Coming, and to the final glory, in which the transfigured body is to be an integral partaker. Let our hopes and longings delightfully adjust themselves to this prominence of 'that blessed hope.' Too often the Church has half forgotten it. I hold, with a faith unreserved and humbly firm, every article

of the Nicene Creed. But am I wrong in wishing, with my Testament open, that the article of the glorious Return had been larger, and more full of *the joy* of the prospect? We do indeed look for our holy Judge. But His apostles, in their utterances concerning the Coming, speak much more often about *the bliss* attendant on the call of the Bridegroom for His Bride, on the rising to indissoluble life of the buried members of the Head, on the radiant transfiguration of the waiting servant, on the crown set so gladly on the head not of the martyr only but of the faithful pastor, on the entrancing hope of recognition and reunion. 'What is our hope, or joy? Is it not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at His coming?'

1 Thess. v. 10

1 Pet. v. 4

1 Thess. ii. 19

'*Until His coming again.*' We know where, in our ancestral worship, those words occur. We are kneeling near the Holy Table, awaiting our communion in the great sacrament of Redemption. The celebrant is in act to hallow the Bread and Wine to be, to our faith, the Body and Blood of the sacrifice of Calvary. The disciple's soul is full, as he kneels, of the Cross and Passion, say rather of the Sufferer, the Crucified. But the sacred Office calls

our faith to the Cross on purpose that it may rise through the Cross to 'the glories that should follow.' It bids us 'lift up our hearts,' and lift them on. We are to recollect that this Communion, as every Communion, is a heaven-given prelude to the Coming. We 'do this in remembrance of Him'—'until His coming again.'

Pet. i. 1

'And thus that dark betrayal night
With the last Advent we unite,
In one blest chain of loving Rite,
Until He come;

'Until the trump of God be heard,
Until the ancient graves be stirred,
And with the great commanding word
The Lord shall come.'[1]

It sheds a wonderful light on the life of faith, the presence in the heart of 'that blessed hope.' Not least it is meant to minister a balm all its own to the wounds of the soul, a cordial to its faintings. For it lifts us, by its very nature, not only above death but beyond the grave. It trains us and accustoms us to dwell already, in an anticipation over which God speaks His blessing, in that great age when death and separations will be left behind for ever. Then every part of the dear being which

[1] *Church Hymns*, Hymn 250.

we have so sorely missed, since the last hour struck, will be released and restored into 'the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.' Rom. viii. 21 That beloved bodily form, in which the Spirit of God dwelt within the spirit of man, will be 'raised incorruptible,' transfigured, 1 Cor. xv. 52 yet itself. The Apostle warns us not to ask, almost not to think, how it shall be. Vainly we try to analyse and make definite any thought about the continuity of the risen form with the buried. And there is no need. For at least we are to be sure that *this* continuity there will be—the same dear spirit will express itself, only with a new fulness and precision, in the body of the resurrection. And that body will be no phantasm; it will be a genuine vehicle for the whole activity of the immortal will, in a real life of doing and serving. Does not the modern advance of discovery among the basal secrets of what we call matter help thought to wait in restful hope for this 'divine event'? We are told now that matter, in its last analysis, seems to rest rather on motion than on mass. Is not the mind better able, for such a suggestion, to grasp the promise that its Maker shall one day 'subdue all things,' matter Phil. iii. 21 as well as spirit, 'to Himself'? Things

seen and tangible, as He has willed them to be, are found to be no intractable solidities in their essence ; they are infinitely plastic to His touch.

ohn vi. 0 However, He has promised. 'I will raise him up, at the last day.' He who year by year re-creates each glory of the garden, after its kind, from the hard seed we bury, and crocus is not confused with snowdrop, nor tulip with lily, knows well how to raise your buried treasure, glorified but entirely human, glorified but wholly himself, the same soul looking through the same eyes and brow, in heaven as upon the earth.

'Until His coming again.' Until 'that day' you must wait. But the waiting will be a vigil in the light. You know that the dear spiritual self meanwhile is in the Garden of God, 'in those heavenly habitations where the souls of them that sleep in the Lord Jesus enjoy perpetual rest and felicity.'[1] You know that you are on the way to join him there, through the same mercy. And you know *not* how soon the hour of the *Parousia* will sound in heaven, and the Lord will rise

[1] The Visitation of the Sick : *A Prayer for a sick Child.*

up and call the bright spirits around Him to prepare to descend with Him, that they may reascend in consummated glory.

'Of that hour knoweth no man.' But we are commanded on the one hand to watch, not to sleep, and on the other to know that it will strike precisely 'when ye think not.' It is an effort, we all know, to entertain the faith of the glorious Return in the midst of modern life. But that is one express reason for the firm confession that just now it may be at the doors. Matt. xxiv. 36 Matt. xxv. 13

There is a beautiful *alto relievo*, carved on a secluded headstone in the cemetery at Clarens, which thirty years ago was shewn me, and left an impress upon me for all my time. The great Angel of the Coming stands there; the trumpet is in one hand, pendent at his side; in the other hand he holds an hour glass. The solemn eyes are bent upon the glass, watching the running sand.

Is this present shock of nations, these awful phenomena of evil, this heaving force of almost visible powers of 'spiritual wickedness,' nothing less than the sound of the falling of the last sands of 'this present age'? Are 'the times of the Gentiles' running out? Is the mysterious destiny of Israel maturing for a new birth? Is Luke xxi. 24

Matt. xxv. 6

the cry near at hand, 'The bridegroom cometh'?

It may be, it may well be. But anywise, in Benson's noble words, 'He may come any time; He must come some time.' And that time will not only be the signal, it will be the efficient cause, of the resurrection of your dead, and of the unutterably happy entrance of you and them together into the fulness of the life of the world to come.

'The Life of the World to Come'

'I go to prepare a Place'

My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near,
At times, to faith's foreseeing eye,
Thy golden gates appear!

. . . .

I hear at morn and even,
At noon and midnight hour,
The choral harmonies of Heaven
Earth's Babel tongues o'erpower.

Then, then I feel that He,
Remembered or forgot,
The Lord, is never far from me,
Though I perceive Him not.

MONTGOMERY

XII

'The Life of the World to Come'

NOTHING is less possible than to picture Heaven, if to picture means to divine and to describe the promised state of bliss, not in symbol but in the letter. A little thought will soon convince us how vain is the attempt to realize, in the sense of a prospective description, a life and sphere where, for one great thing, there is no end; where, in the Master's mighty words, 'they cannot die any more.' Almost as soon as we begin to imagine, to shape into defining figure, the process of endless life, its occupations, its intercourse, its joys, does not a fear of fatigue, however faint and distant, set in? To sing and to strike the harp for ever, to contemplate for ever—the words are beautiful as symbols for realities past our present conception. But taken as they stand, to be explained in terms of experience, they almost inevitably bewilder. We may be tempted to sympathize with the gentle scepticism of the

Luke xx. 36.

old Christian woman in *The Harvester*, who never could be happy about 'those foundations' of the City in the skies, for *what did they stand on*?

On the other hand, how terrible would be the thought that the heavenly bliss could possibly have an end! It would be a sorrowful escape from the fear of an immortal weariness to be told that the heavenly nations, like the earthly, would fade like the grass at last. And the result of the two opposite thoughts is just this, that we do wisely to set aside all elaborated imaginations of Heaven. But all the more let the soul apply itself to these glorious intimations in the Book of Hope which point to the essentials of the blessed life.

i. Remember then first, what may lift from the tired mind all fear that there it will be tired. Remember that the heart and soul of the heavenly life, as we have seen, is this: 'We shall ever be with the Lord.' In Virgil's great poem we have a strangely beautiful picture of the pagan paradise, the Elysian fields. We see bards, heroes, priests, human benefactors, enjoying an interminable leisure and pleasure, amidst the groves, lawns, and streams of their green underworld. But

one momentous thing is entirely lacking in the scene. There is no central Presence, holy, living, life-giving. And I for one can never read the incomparable Latin without a haunting sense of impending *satiety*. Our Christian Heaven will not be so. 'I will come again, and receive you unto myself'; 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory'; 'They shall walk with me in white'; 'The Lamb . . . shall feed them, and shall lead them'; 'They shall see His face.'

John xiv. 3

John xvii. 2

Rev. ii 4; vii. xxii 4.

ii. Recognition, and reunion, and companionship will be vivid experiences of Heaven. We have seen sure tokens that they will be present in the intermediate state. All the more certain is it that in the complete life, in the perfect consummation, we shall know, and love, and converse, with an unspeakable intimacy of delight. We have already recalled with what an exalted joy of friendship St. Paul anticipates his personal reunion at the Coming, in the life of consummation, with his dear Thessalonians. In one passage he links together the Coming and the Meeting, face to face, heart to heart, in one

deep breath of expectation: 'We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him.' Again he speaks, in words cited already, words quite meaningless without the certainty of individual welcomes and the embraces which clasp long-known friends: 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are not even ye*, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at His coming?'

Such recognition, such individual and immortal loving, lies in the very nature of our hope of bodily resurrection. What do we know each other by here? By the expression of the soul, through the body which it animates and fills. Well, the body of the resurrection is a concrete reality. It is indeed 'a spiritual body,' made for the perfect possession and wielding of *the spirit*. But it will be itself material, though glorified. As such, it will be an absolutely responsive vehicle for the self-expression of the blessed personality. We shall know each other there, through the body, not less but more, in all the depths and treasures of the individual character—that character which will grow always 'from glory to glory' on the individual

lines laid, so to speak, this side the grave. Yes, a hundred times be it said; they whom we love will be their dear selves there, knowing us, for ever. 'If I did not love you there,' said a deeply-taught young Christian, dying, 'I should be someone else.' 'As is the heavenly One, such are they also that are heavenly.' The Lord was unspeakably Himself, and not another, in the body of His resurrection. 'It is I myself.' When He returns out of the heaven of heavens He will still be 'this same Jesus.' In this also let us remember that 'we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him.' So let us settle and make secure our hope of a recognition unspeakably happy, by 'that intensely real and practical force in human life,' in Francis Paget's words, 'the power of Christ's Resurrection.'

1 Cor. 48

Luke xxiv. Acts i.

1 John iii. 2

iii. Then, assuredly, the heavenly life will be a life occupied, serviceable, self-devoted to the commands of God. There the human will will be more free than ever; only, like the supreme free will of God, it will eternally settle itself upon perfect good. It will be determined immovably from within, in a secure 'necessity of holiness' —which does but mean the perfect freedom of a being which sees all truth

perfectly, and is perfectly attuned to it in all things.

A generous serviceableness is the very salt of existence here. It must be likewise, in absolute measure, there. The three great expressions of that all-happy life will be Love, Praise, Service. *Love* will be the very breath of the saints; love, which goes always out from self to find its bliss in the good of another; love, which will eternally rejoice to give joy to the Shepherd who sought and found His wanderer, and then to give joy to all and each who share with the sinless lover the life of love. *Praise* will be the native language of the very being of the saints, the voice of a joy which looks out from self, with an unspeakable content, upon the excellences of others; delighting above all in the supreme Excellence of the all-satisfying God, and then in the excellences, the holy glory and beauty, of the blessed lives around. That praise will be an eternal song, loud with the harps and viols of spiritual jubilation, pulsating through the whole existence of the redeemed. The music, I do not doubt, will ever and again find loud expression in 'such concord as is in Heaven,' the choral counter-

part of our terrestrial anthems, sounds such as those which entranced the midnight upon the field of Bethlehem. But the whole life, motion, action, will be music; one melody of self-forgetting praise, one deep flow of harmony beneath the melody, the movements of a spirit one with the will of God. And *Service* will be the unending occupation of the blessed, in all the progress and acquisitions of their life. For surely in Heaven they will still advance and attain for ever, finding always more to win, in the light of God. But never, nevermore, will the gain be sought for self. It will be for the King always, and for other lives in Him.

What can be the works and responsibilities of Heaven? What is intended by the 'authority over cities,' in the parable where the faithful servants who have done well are rewarded, not with workless ease, but with charge and power? I dare to think that, as the holy angels found it no loss to their bliss to visit Peter in the dungeon or Paul in the tornado, so the immortals of our race may have wonderful work to do, full of the exalted joy of sacrifice, in dark places of the universe. But this is no more than a

Luke xix. 17

reverent venture of thought. Only it is certain that never, to all the endless ages, will the bliss of Heaven be wasted on one self-regarding aim. The happy spirit must always and with rejoicing go out from itself. It must spend itself, and give itself, for ever. For ever it is 'not its own.'

A great Christian preacher, Edward Irving, in a sermon on the Heavenly Happiness, speaks nobly thus :—

'I hope that in Heaven the instability of virtue will be removed, and that there may be no more talk about the golden mean, but that the heart may drink deep and not be intoxicated with its affections, the head think on and not be wearied with its cogitations. And I hope that there will be no narrowness of means, no penury, no want; and that benevolence will be no more racked with inability to bestow.'

All this will be the movement of a life lived always, whatever may be its outgoings and activities, in one most holy spiritual locality. Like Gabriel, wherever, to whomsoever, each blessed human being is 'sent,'
ke i. 19 he will yet say, 'I stand in the presence
v. vii. of God.' 'They are before the throne of

God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.'

'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' Let us close our contemplation with that dear promise. My friend, sorely bereaved, famishing for a beloved presence, you to whom earth and heaven seem overcast with one cold cloud since your sorrow struck you, 'be not afraid; only believe.' Your beloved one —his is no wasted life. He has gone already, not into nothing, but to the 'land of pure delight,' to the Presence, to the face of Christ. He is ready for you there when you too go. And he shall come again, brought back with joy, in the bright train of the returning King.

Rev. vii. 17

'Wherefore let us comfort one another.' 1 Thess. iv. 18

In that world three enemies we have known too well on earth shall be seen no more for ever. Sin will be gone : 'They are without fault.' Grief will be gone : 'Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' Death will be buried : 'They cannot die any more.'

H. Mary Moule

'Nevertheless Afterward'

Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this Thy grace must give.

My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.

Baxter

AN EPILOGUE

'Nevertheless Afterward'

'NO chastening, for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless—afterward.' Heb. xii. 3–11

The words occur in a deeply sympathetic paragraph in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Pain and trial are in question, and the disciplinary work of grief. Grief, we are reminded, comes not by chance to the Christian; it is the choice and gift of a Father, who loves His children too truly and too wisely to leave them spoiled, unchastened. The process is distressing; this is frankly and tenderly owned; we are not to affect not to feel it. But it is all on purpose; it is to prepare us for a great and untroubled joy to follow. Be patient; your Father means infinitely well. He hurts you to-day. But to-morrow will explain all, in a joy unspeakable. 'Nevertheless—afterward.'

I am about to bid my stricken friend adieu. As we part, I wish to let that great 'afterward,' that serene and wonderful 'hereafter,' lay its anodyne upon your

pain. 'Nevertheless afterward'; 'Thou shalt know hereafter.'

I say farewell with a deep reverence of heart. It is a bold thing to speak to souls called to the solemn dignity of heavy sorrow. The would-be consoler recollects that his reader, very likely, has much the better right to be the instructor. Let whatever the consoler has tried to say be taken as chastened by that thought.

Yours, O friend, is a grief, as we have already remembered, touched with the light of a great glory. A country unspeakably dear, a cause as righteous, as approvable before God, as ever called for the patriot's sacrifice, these things have brought you your tribulation.

> 'The tears by bards and heroes shed
> Alike immortalize the dead.'

And your dear one has suffered, has been maimed, has been slain, in a conflict in which the noblest poets and greatest leaders of men might find endless occasions for the tribute of their wonder and their tears.

This is not everything. Alas, you know it, in the depths of your sad soul. But it is something. A great loss suffered for

right, for love, for God, means a mighty gain—'afterward.'

And how nobly have you, and such as you, responded to the call to suffer such glorious but bitter loss! Before me lies a note, edged with black. It is written by a much honoured friend. We had read of her bereavement, the death of her son; and we had asked that the parents, so dear to us, would come for a while, if they cared to do so, from the toils of a great and prominent parish to the quiet of our old dwelling. The answer is graciously affectionate. But the visit must not be. 'I wish we could, but my husband is particularly busy. He feels that he does not want to fail in his duty when our dear boy died doing his duty to the last.'

How can I but bow my head in homage to such a grief, so accepted, and almost ask its forgiveness that I have talked to it so long?

But the last word after all, very humbly spoken, shall be a *Sursum Corda*. It shall point towards the name of CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR and the hope of the 'afterward' of God. The grief is noble. But it will only rise to yet nobler phases as the bearer of it looks upward, beyond all disciplines

and mysteries, and affirms to his, or to her, stricken heart that yet, 'afterward,' 'sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

Isa. xxxv. 10

The immortal sun shall yet change the clouds into glory. It shall yet shew the fragmentary masses of inexplicable mystery to be pillars and arches in a temple, infinitely beautiful, whose builder and maker is God.

Let me, by way of parable, simply record two sights which I have seen, and then take my leave. Parables, to be sure, prove nothing. But they can lift and lighten thought and faith. And, because all things truly good and fair come ultimately from one 'all-beauteous Mind,' it is at least possible that the analogies and illustrations exchanged between such things are more than chance and fancy.

Several years ago I was conducted, one Saturday night, late in the year, over Westminster Abbey. A friend, familiar with the marvellous church, was my guide. With a lantern in his hand he ushered me in by a private door, and we made our exploration. Aisle, nave, choir, royal chapels, all were traversed through the vast shadows, while the narrow light just made our walking possible, and threw gleaming hints of bulk and shape upon the

immense world of structure around us and above us. An almost oppression of mystery occupied my senses. I had often seen the Abbey by daylight. But it now seemed something other; an undiscovered wilderness of uncomprehended space and majestic but bewildering form—half shewn, half hidden, by the struggling lamp. The giant pillars soared into a dark void. The arches sprang to meet I saw not what. Relation was cast into a confusion which seemed to defy the mind's effort to construct.

The morning came, radiant with a clear autumnal sun. The Sunday's matins began, and I stood in a stall within the glorious choir. The mysteries of the night were now the miracles and splendours of the day. The majesty of that surpassing temple shone before me, all the more majestic for the order, the relation, the sublime adjustment, the reason, the mind, that looked upon my mind through it all. Walls, columns, arches, responded to each other, and dignified each other, till mass was etherealized into grace; all crowned and unified by the marvellous roof which had been so impenetrably hidden by night, hanging so very far above the poor lantern's reach.

Was it not a parable? It was a parable set as a soul-moving anthem, though the music came only through the eyes. And the words of it were the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken beside a sepulchre, to a sister's
n xi. broken heart: 'Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?'

Another sight was given me, on a later occasion. I was in Switzerland, spending a winter fortnight in beautiful Beatenberg Dorf, the village which climbs far along the side of the mountain mass which bears the name of Ireland's missionary saint, Beatus, and looks down from its eyrie on Interlaken and the lake of Thun. It was Sunday, and the sun was gloriously bright. I sat awhile in the village churchyard, and read now some heart-moving epitaphs near me, now a book that lifted the thoughts above; the air was warm as in May. Meanwhile, below me by a hundred feet or so, what did I see? The lake was invisible, and Interlaken too. But the vast hollow of the Thunersee looked as if it were floored, far above the waters, with a plain of dazzling white. It was as if a broad mere were there, frozen into a solid level, and snowed all over, smooth and even, while the

cloudless winter noon so dwelt upon it and in it that it glittered and radiated, one wide sheen of living light.

What was it? It was the *Nebelmeer*, the 'Mist-sea.' It was nothing but the upper side, the sunward side, of a cloudy day. If I had walked down to Interlaken, I should have found myself under the gray canopy of the winter. If I had not been aloft before, I should have idly imagined, very likely, that the whole vault of air, as high as air extends, was likewise colourless and cold, sad with an oppression on the spirits, an all-prevailing world of cloud and fog. Yet only two thousand feet above the plain, all the while, there lay the top, the surface, of the gloom. And that was one broad snowy glory, shining moonlike in answer to a triumphant sun.

Was not this also a parable? And it came yet more directly from the 'faithful Creator' than even that given me by the human miracle of Westminster. Did not the *Nebelmeer* speak from God to the heart? It repeated, in the language of light, the promise of the Friend of man: 'Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' John xvi 20

Take a few more steps upward, O friend,

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